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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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Israel approves ceasefire-hostage deal with Hamas

The agreement will initiate 1st phase of the ceasefire in Gaza and facilitate the release of both Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners ***PHOTO: X***

TEL AVIV, 18 JAN

The Israeli government has approved the ceasefire and hostage release deal with Hamas, accord-ing to a report by Times of Israel.

By a vote of 24-8, the cabinet approved the deal, which is set to take effect on Sunday. The deal was approved in the early hours of Saturday.

The agreement will initiate the first phase of the ceasefire in Gaza and facilitate the release of both Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners.

The Times of Israel further reported that as the govern-ment has now approved the agreement, opponents of the deal can petition the High Court of Justice against the release of Palestinian secu-rity prisoners who are set to be freed, though the court is unlikely to intervene.

On Friday, the Israeli security cabinet had approved the hostage release-ceasefire deal with Hamas and recommend-ed the government to adopt it.

The Israel government's hos-tages and missing persons coordination unit on Friday notified the families of the 33 Israeli hostages expected to be set free in the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire deal.

Israel has not been told how many of the 33 are alive, though it expects the majority are. Israel will receive a full status report on all those on the list seven days into the ceasefire. The order of re-lease is not yet known. The identi-ties of those set to return are expected to be provided 24 hours before each release, as reported by Times of Israel.

Beyond the 33 hostages set for release in phase one, Israel says 65 more hostages are cur-rently held in Gaza, including the bodies of at least 36 con-firmed dead. As the first phase progresses, talks will focus on the release of remaining hos-tages, ending the war, and Gaza's future reconstruction.

Israeli and Hamas negotiat-ing teams signed the deal in Doha early Friday after clear-ing the final hurdles. Both the US and Qatar, who mediated the negotiations, announced on Wednesday that an agree-ment had been reached to end the 15-month war in Gaza trig-gered by Hamas' 7 October, 2023, attack, killing over 1200 civilians and holding over 250 as hostages, of which around 100 are still in captivity. —*ANI*

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PHOTO: X

Suspect in Saif's attack detained in Chhattisgarh

MUMBAI, 18 JAN

Two days after Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan was stabbed at his home during a robbery bid, a 31-year-old suspect was on Saturday detained from a train at Durg railway station in Chhattisgarh, officials said. The man, whose photo had been shared by Mumbai Police with the Railway Protection Force (RPF), was traveling by the Jnaneshwari Express which runs between Mumbai Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (LTT) to Kolkata Shalimar. He was identified as Aakash Kailash Kannojia and a Mumbai police team would be reaching soon to take his custody, said an RPF official in Durg. Saif Ali Khan, 54, grievously injured in the attack, is recovering well at Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital and could be discharged in two-three days, according to doctors. —*PTI*

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CM Siddaramaiah announces ₹6 cr for Olympic medalists

MANGALURU, 18 JAN

In a major boost to the State's sports community, Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has announced a Rs 6 crore reward for athletes who win medals at the Olympics. The announcement came during the inauguration of the Karnataka Games 2025, organised by the Youth and Sports Department and the District Administration Complex. Speaking at the event, CM Siddaramaiah emphasised the im-por-tance of providing athletes with the right encourage-ment and platforms to excel. He said, "We will also offer cash prizes to athletes who win medals at the Asian and National level. This is to inspire and moti-vate them to bring glory to the country." Additionally, he announced that Rs 3 crore each would be allo-cated in the next budget for the upgradation of stadiums. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Aero India: BBMP bans meat stalls, non-veg food

BENGALURU, 18 JAN

Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) has issued a public notice ordering the closure of meat stalls and non-vege-tarian restaurants within a 13km radius of the Yelahanka Air Force Station from 23 January to 17 February. BBMP stated that the measure has been taken as a precaution for the Aero India show, scheduled from 10 to 14 February. BBMP sources said this action is primarily to prevent bird strikes on aeroplanes during practice sessions and the event. This includes a pro-hi-bition on serving or sell-ing non-vegetarian dishes during this period. The BBMP has warned that any violation of this order will result in penalties. —*PTI*

RG Kar verdict: Sanjay Roy pronounced guilty

Roy claims that he was framed; parents express gratitude

KOLKATA, 18 JAN

A Kolkata court on Saturday found Sanjay Roy guilty of raping and murdering an on-duty doctor at the state-run RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, a heinous crime that ignited nationwide outrage and led to prolonged protests.

The Sealdah court, where Roy's trial was held, will announce his sentence on Monday, Additional District and Sessions Judge Anirban Das said.

The verdict was delivered nearly two months after the in-camera trial began in November 2024, and 162 days after the brutal crime on 9 August, 2024.

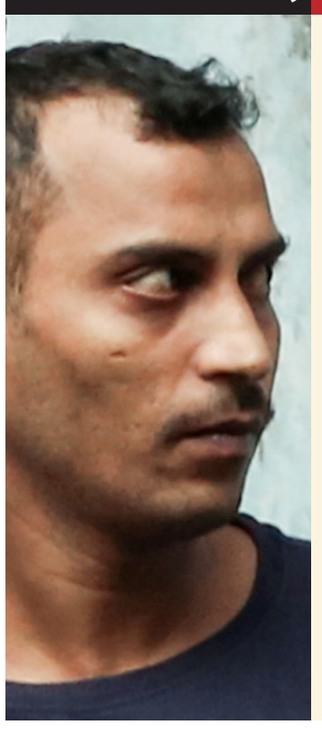
Roy, arrested a day after the crime, was found guilty under Sections 64 (rape), 66 (punish-ment for causing death),and 103(1) (murder) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS).

The judge stated that Roy was found guilty of sexually assaulting the doctor and strangling her to death, and that the CBI had proven all the charges against him.

Das noted that Roy had entered the hospital around 4 am and attacked the on-duty doctor while she was asleep in the seminar room of the hospi-tal.

"You sexually assaulted the doctor. You throttled her and covered her face and she ulti-mately died owing to the attack," he said.

CASE CLOSED, BATTLE CONTINUES...



RG Kar Hospital rape and murder case, involving the tragic death of a trainee doctor in Kolkata in Au-gust 2024, sparked widespread protests and a high-profile investigation. Here's a timeline of the case

9 AUGUST 2024: The semi-na-ked body of the trainee doctor was discovered on the third floor of the seminar hall at the state-run RG Kar Hospital in Kolkata

10 AUGUST: Police arrested Sanjoy Roy, the accused

15 AUGUST: A mob vandalised the RG Kar Hospital's emergency department and nursing station on Independence Day. IMA announced a nationwide 24-hour withdrawal of services

20 AUGUST: SC bench, led by Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, formed a 10-member task force to develop national safety proto-cols for doctors

2 SEPTEMBER: CBI arrested Sandip Ghosh over financial fraud allegations during his tenure at RG Kar Hospital

3 OCTOBER: Doctors from the West Bengal Junior Doctors Front went on a hunger strike

7 OCTOBER: The CBI filed a chargesheet against Sanjoy Roy in the rape and murder case

21 OCTOBER: Protesting doctors ended their 17-day hunger strike after meeting Mamata Banerjee

29 NOVEMBER: CBI filed a 125-page chargesheet in the RG Kar financial irregularities case, nam-ing Sandip Ghosh

18 JANUARY 2025: The Sealdah court delivered its verdict - Sanjoy Roy pronounced guilty

Das said Roy's statement will be heard at 12:30 pm on Monday, and the sentence will be pro-nounced thereaf-ter.

At the time of the delivery of the verdict, Roy claimed in court that he was framed.

In his defense, Roy said, "I wear rudrakash necklace, and if I had committed the crime, it would have snapped."

Following the verdict, Roy was escorted under strict police security to the Presidency Correctional Home, preventing waiting media persons from speaking to him.

The parents of the deceased doctor expressed gratitude to the court for delivering jus-tice, with her father stating, "The trust we had placed in you, you have honoured it completely."

Roy's elder sister, speaking from her home in Bhawanipore, said that the family would not chal-lenge the court's decision. —*PTI*

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K'taka BJP Prez election soon: Shivraj Chauhan

BENGALURU, 18 JAN

Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan on Saturday said the Karnataka State BJP presi-dent election would soon be held.

Chauhan, who is also the BJP's internal election in-charge for Karnataka, said that the process to elect the new president has started.

"Soon the election for the State president will start. We hold booth level leaders' elec-tions as well. Sometimes the people are elected unanimous-ly," Chauhan said.

Currently, the Shikaripura MLA BY Vijayendra is hold-ing the state president post. He is son of BJP strongman and former Chief Minister BS Yediyurappa.

A section of BJP MLAs and leaders, including Vijayapura MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal and Gokak MLA Ramesh Jarkiholi, are oppos-ing Vijayendra.

Chauhan also said the Centre has sanctioned an additional 4.68 lakh houses for the people from the economically weaker sections in Karnataka.

This is apart from the 2.57 lakh houses sanctioned by the Centre originally, Chauhan, who holds rural development, agriculture and farmers' Welfare portfolio, told report-ers here.

The Minister said he had a meeting with Karnataka rural development, revenue and agriculture ministers this morning.

After Narendra Modi took oath as the Prime Minister for the third term, he sanctioned 2.57 lakh houses in September as part of his commitment to provide a 'Pucca' house for every poor family of the state and released grants for it, he said.

Chauhan appealed to the Karnataka government to complete the housing project at the earliest. Under the Border Area Development Scheme Rs 97 crore will be released for Karnataka, the Minis-ter said adding that the Centre also agreed to release additional grants for the mechanisation scheme in the agriculture department. —*PTI*

The election for the State president will start soon. We will hold booth level leaders' elections as well. Sometimes the people are elected unanimously

-Union Minister Shivraj Singh Chauhan

TEEN GETS PREGNANT, THROWS FOETUS NEAR DRAIN IN GUJARAT

AHMEDABAD, 18 JAN

A foetus was discovered near a drain in Surat's Apekshanagar on 9 January, surrounded by debris, including an empty cigarette packet and balloons. Carrion-eating birds hovered over the site, prompting children to disperse them by throwing stones. Alarmed by their discovery, the children alerted the authorities.

The infant, a girl, was rushed to the civil hospital but was declared dead on arrival.

Investigations led the police to a 16-year-old girl, ini-tially denied involve-ment by both her and her mother.

Further inquiry revealed that the girl had befriended a 17-year-old boy on Instagram. When the boy learned of her preg-nancy, he fled and sent abor-tion pills to her. —*Agencies*

AAP: Kejri's car attacked; BJP says it hit 2 youths

Arvind Kejriwal ***PHOTO: PTI***

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

AAP on Saturday alleged that party chief Arvind Kejriwal's car was attacked by BJP sup-porters dur-ing campaigning in the New Delhi constituen-cy.

"Supporters of BJP's New Delhi candidate Parvesh Verma attacked Kejriwal during campaigning in the constituency," an AAP leader said.

Denying the AAP's charges, the BJP claimed that some party workers were attacked by AAP volun-teers. Verma was heading to Lady Hardinge hospital to meet injured party workers, BJP leaders said.

Later, in a post on X, BJP's Verma alleged that Kejriwal's vehicle hit two youths.

"Arvind Kejriwal hit two youths with his vehicle. Both were taken to Lady Hardinge hospital. Seeing imminent defeat, (he) forgot the price of human lives," Verma said in the post.

Police said that no one pelted stones at the Kejriwal's car but some people were trying to show black flags to the former chief minister, who were immediately removed from the spot.

In a purported video of the incident, Kejriwal can be seen sitting in a vehicle with police personnel clearing the route for it. A man waving a black piece of cloth and a stone hurled towards the vehicle were also seen in the video clip. —*PTI*

BUMRAH IN, KARUN NAIR OUT

Champions Trophy squad announced, Rohit to lead

MUMBAI, 18 JAN

Premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah was on Saturday named in India's squad for the Champions Trophy with his availability depending on fitness, and talented opener Yashasvi Jaiswal expectedly re-ceived the nod from the selec-tors, who also brought back Mohammed Shami in the national fold.

Bumrah had suffered back spasms during the recent Sydney Test against Australia and did not bowl on the final day at SCG.

But the Ajit Agarkar-led selection panel went ahead and included the 31-year-old in the squads that will do duty in the home ODIs against England and in the marquee ICC event, starting 19 Feb-ruary.

Top-order batter Shubman Gill has been appointed as the vice-captain of the squad that had did not have place for pacer Mohammed Siraj.

Rohit Sharma, who will lead the side against England in the CT, explained the ratio-nale behind se-lecting Bumrah with an asterisk against his name.

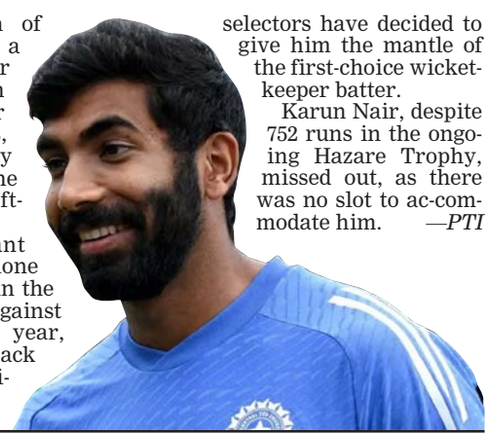
Rohit hoped that seasoned pacer Shami and left-arm pacer Arshdeep Singh will support Bumrah, or step in the eventuality of him missing the tournament.

Rohit termed Siraj unfortu-nate to miss out on the selec-tion and said his reduced effect with the old ball played a part in it.

The selection of Jaiswal was a no-brainer after his fine run Down Under albeit in Tests, and the va-riety he offers at the top as a left-hander.

Rishabh Pant has played a lone one-day match in the last two years, against Sri Lanka last year, af-ter coming back from the acci-dent, but the selectors have decided to give him the mantle of the first-choice wicket-keeper batter.

Karun Nair, despite 752 runs in the ongo-ing Hazare Trophy, missed out, as there was no slot to ac-com-modate him. —*PTI*



M'luru man 'kills' wife, dies by consuming acid

MANGALURU, 18 JAN

A man from Nellur Kemraje village shot his wife dead and ended his life by consuming acid used for rubber processing, police said on Saturday. Ramachandra Gowda killed his wife, Vinoda Kumari, on Friday night. He later ingested rubber acid and died shortly after, according to the police. Gowda, reportedly an alcoholic, frequently quarrelled with his family members, including his parents, wife, and son, during his nightly bouts of intoxication. His son, Prashanth SR, 26, a resident of Kodimajalu, revealed that his father returned home heavily drunk on Friday and began verbally abusing his parents and wife. *—PTI*

BTP allows free left turn on Jayadeva junction

BENGALURU, 18 JAN

In order to manage congestion caused by the ongoing white-topping work on the Outer Ring Road, the Bengaluru Traffic Police (BTP) has allowed free left turn for the vehicles moving on the Jayadeva junction towards Bannerghatta Road. In a notification issued on Saturday, BTP said that vehicles coming from Vega City Mall Junction on Bannerghatta Road towards Jayadeva Junction can take a free left turn to join the Outer Ring Road towards Banashankari via the service road at Jayadeva Junction. As part of the changes, all types of vehicles are restricted from using the stretch between BTM 29th Main Junction on ORR and Ruby Junction on Bannerghatta Main Road. Bengaluru Traffic Police has urged motorists to cooperate with the temporary changes and plan their travel accordingly. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Demand for MP Pratap's expulsion from BJP grows

MYSURU, 18 JAN

The demand for former MP Pratap Simha's expulsion from the BJP has intensified after several party activists filed a complaint against him, accusing him of anti-party activities. The complaint was submitted to State BJP President BY Vijayendra, urging his removal from the party. Speaking to reporters on Saturday, Member of Parliament Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar expressed his concerns about Pratap Simha's conduct following his denial of a ticket to contest the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Wadiyar claimed that Simha's actions in recent months have caused significant unrest among loyal party workers. Wadiyar urged Simha to stop making embarrassing remarks about the state party organization and to stop acting independently. City BJP President L Nagendra also confirmed that some party activists were dissatisfied with Simha and had filed a complaint. *—Salar News*

Leopard spotted at Lingambudhi Lake in Mysuru

MYSURU, 18 JAN

A leopard was spotted at Lingambudhi Lake in Ramakrishna Nagar, Mysuru, during the early hours of Saturday. In response, the forest department, along with Mysuru City Corporation officials, decided to close the park's main gate to visitors until further notice to ensure safety. The sighting was reported by morning joggers who immediately alerted the forest department. Officials swiftly arrived at the scene and initiated a search operation to capture the leopard. They have set up camera traps and placed a cage at strategic locations around the park after conducting a thorough assessment of the area. *—Salar News*

BJP seeks CM's resignation after ED attaches assets

People deserve transparency & justice, says BY Vijayendra

BENGALURU, 18 JAN

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has demanded that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah resign immediately following the Enforcement Directorate's (ED) recent attachment of 142 immovable properties linked to the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) land scam. The properties, valued at approximately Rs 300 crore, were provisionally attached under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and are registered in the names of individuals connected to real estate businesses.

BJP state president BY Vijayendra called for Siddaramaiah's resignation in a post on social media platform X, asserting that the Chief Minister must uphold the integrity of his office to allow for an impartial investigation. "The people of Karnataka deserve transparency, accountability, and justice," he stated.

The ED's investigation reveals allegations that Siddaramaiah leveraged his political influence to secure compensation in the form of 14 prime plots for his wife, Smt BM Parvathi, in exchange for land acquired by MUDA. The compensation is reportedly worth around Rs 56 crore, significantly exceeding the initial acquisition cost of Rs 3,24,700.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah PHOTO: PTI

- ED's investigation reveals allegations that Siddaramaiah leveraged his political influence to secure compensation in the form of 14 prime plots for his wife

Vijayendra also pointed to the role of former MUDA commissioner DB Natesh in the questionable allocation of these properties, further highlighting systemic corruption. He criticised the Congress party for undermining the constitutional authority of the Governor, who sanctioned Siddaramaiah's prosecution, a decision upheld by the Karnataka High Court.

The BJP leader emphasised that these findings validate the party's anti-corruption stance and suggested that a comprehensive CBI investigation is necessary to uncover the full extent of the alleged misappropriation of public funds. *—PTI*

MP Yaduveer calls for CM's resignation

MYSURU, 18 JAN

Following the Enforcement Directorate's attachment of 142 properties worth Rs 300 crore linked to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's family in the alleged Mysore Urban Development Authority (MUDA) scam, MP Yaduveer Wadiyar has demanded the Chief Minister's resignation, citing moral responsibility. Speaking to the press, Wadiyar expressed concerns that CM's refusal to step down hinders a transparent investigation. BJP plans to protests seeking his resignation. *—PTI*

'DISCREPANCY IN FUNDS'

State seeks fair share of Central funds: Byre Gowda

BENGALURU, 18 JAN

In a significant meeting addressing State financial allocations, Karnataka Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda has voiced concerns over the equitable distribution of central funds to Karnataka.

Speaking to ANI, after meeting with Union Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, Byre Gowda stated, "We have requested that based on the performance of Karnataka, whatever funds are eligible for the state of Karnataka should be released. I have expressed a discrepancy in calculating the funds deserved by Karnataka, and injustice done to Karnataka under some schemes."

He emphasised his confidence in resolving these issues, stating, "I'm confident he will correct the imbalance in funds released to Karnataka under special capital assistance," he further added.

On Friday, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah raised the concern of budget allocation to the State. He slammed the NDA government, accusing them of betraying Karnataka.

He pointed out that out of Rs1,73,030 crore allocated to states, Karnataka received only Rs 6,310 crore, a significant drop from previous allocations, as he stated in his official release.

PHOTO: PTI

- According to his release, in 2018-19, the State received Rs 46,288 crores, but in 2024-25, it has been allocated only Rs 44,485 crores, with an additional Rs15,299 crore in grants

According to his release, In 2018-19, the State received Rs46,288 crores, but in 2024-25, it has been allocated only Rs 44,485 crores, with an additional Rs15,299 crore in grants. *—ANI*

'Jai Bapu-Jai Bhim': DKS calls to protect Constitution

HUBBALLI, 18 JAN

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar has emphasised the significance of the upcoming Jai Bapu-Jai Bhim-Jai Samvidhan convention as a platform to honour Mahatma Gandhi and BR Ambedkar while reinforcing the importance of safeguarding the Constitution.

Speaking in Hubballi after a meeting with party leaders to finalise preparations, Shivakumar underscored the convention's role in conveying a powerful message from Belagavi.

"Gandhiji's history is intertwined with the Congress, and Congress's history is the nation's history. By empowering all sections of society, we are following in the footsteps of Mahatma Gandhi," he stated.

Reflecting on the legacy of Gandhi, who assumed the Congress presidency a century ago, Shivakumar highlighted the pivotal role the party played in achieving independence and subsequently framing the Constitution, which he described as "sacred" to the nation.

The All India Congress Committee (AICC), under the leadership of Mallikarjun Kharge, is spearheading this event to spotlight these ideals.

HK Patil has been tasked with coordinating the convention, which has been planned in consultation with senior leaders in Delhi.

Shivakumar revealed that the event, postponed from 27 December due to the demise of former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, will now take place on 21 January.

He also announced plans to establish 100 party offices across Karnataka, with preparations slated for February. *—Salar News*

Lawyer threatened over youth drug abuse video

BENGALURU, 18 JAN

A local lawyer, Advocate Hussain Owais S, has reported receiving threatening calls from unknown individuals after he shared a video revealing a group of young men involved in drug abuse and public disorder near Sultan Shah Masjid in the Shivajinagar area.

On 10 January, Owais filmed five to six youths allegedly consuming narcotics and behaving inappropriately, particularly towards women. Following the incident, he reported it to the police by posting the footage on social media.

In response, local law enforcement increased surveillance in the area and warned several youths against unlawful behaviour. However, Owais soon began receiving abusive phone calls from alleged drug peddlers, demanding that he remove the video from social media. *—Salar News*

SC to hear Atul's mother's custody plea on 20 January

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Supreme Court is scheduled to hear on Monday a plea filed by the mother of Atul Subhash, a Bengaluru-based engineer who committed suicide in 2024 alleging harassment by wife, seeking his minor son's custody.

A bench of Justices BV Nagarathna and Saish Chandra Sharma is likely to hear the plea by Anju Devi who has filed a habeas corpus petition, seeking the custody of her four-year-old grandson.

On 7 January, the top court had denied her the minor's custody saying she was "stranger to the child".

Subhash, 34, who was found hanging at his house in Bengaluru's Munnekolalu on 9 December last year, purportedly left behind lengthy messages, blaming his wife and in-laws for pushing him to take the extreme step.

During the last hearing, the top court was informed by the counsel appearing for Subhash's estranged wife Nikita Singhania that the child was studying at a boarding school in Haryana.

Advocate Kumar Dushyant Singh, representing Devi, had sought the child's custody and alleged her estranged daughter-in-law had kept child's location under wraps.

A Bengaluru court on 4 January granted bail to Subhash's estranged wife, her mother Nisha Singhania and brother Anurag Singhania, in the abetment of suicide case. *—PTI*

Bengaluru techie Atul Subhash with his mother PHOTO: X

City cops deny mishandling Spaniard's distress call

BENGALURU, 18 JAN

The City police have issued a clarification refuting media reports that alleged improper handling of a distress call from a Spanish national, Jesus Abril, claiming he was disregarded due to language barriers for not speaking Kannada.

In a statement released on Saturday, Police Commissioner B Dayananda clarified the sequence of the incident as recorded by the Police Control Room (PCR).

The incident occurred on 15 January 2025 at approximately 2am at an apartment owned by the Spanish citizen Jesus Abril, on Langford Town Road, Richmond Town.

An unidentified perpetrator reportedly broke the bathroom window to enter the house and committed theft.

Following the incident, Jesús Abril attempted to call the Namma helpline number 112 at 9.17am but disconnected without providing any details.

Within a few minutes two more calls were made but there was no specific information about the incident.

The Commissioner emphasised that there is no record of any calls made by Jesús Abril to the helpline during the night of the incident. The report was filed only on the next morning, said the Bengaluru police chief while dismissing the allegations reported in the media as baseless. *—Salar News*

OUT OF RS 7.59 CRORE

₹5.42 cr tax arrears on mobile towers in Kalaburagi

KALABURAGI, 18 JAN

Kalaburagi district is facing a significant shortfall in tax collection from telecom service providers who have installed mobile towers across the region. Despite a total tax liability of Rs 7.59 crore over the past nine years, only Rs 2.16 crore has been collected, leaving an outstanding tax arrears of Rs 5.42 crore.

The district has 683 mobile towers spread across 261 Gram Panchayats, including 42 in Alanda, 29 in Chincholi, 27 in Chittapur, and others in various taluks. These towers belong to major telecom companies such as BSNL, Jio, Vodafone, Tata, Reliance, and others. Kalaburagi has the second-highest number of mobile towers in the state, after Belagavi, which has 1,063 towers. However, the collection of taxes on these towers has been dismal.

PHOTO: PIXABAY

Bhamwar Singh Meena, CEO of Zilla Panchayat, emphasised the importance of tax collection and noted that the Panchayat is taking special care to recover dues from mobile tower companies. *—Salar News*

VILLAGERS PANIC

Scientific payload balloon falls in Bidar

BIDAR, 18 JAN

Residents of Jalasingi village in Humnabad Taluk experienced panic on Saturday morning when a scientific balloon launched by the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR) fell in their vicinity. The balloon, which was sent from Hyderabad on 17 January at 10pm for meteorological studies, crashed with a loud noise around 6am, leading villagers to initially believe it was debris from a satellite.

Curious locals quickly surrounded the fallen payload, causing concern among the community. Local police, upon arriving at the scene, identified the equipment as a research payload and contacted TIFR officials for clarification. TIFR acknowledged the incident and stated that scientists would soon visit the village to retrieve the payload.

Curious locals quickly surrounded the fallen payload, causing concern among the community, in Bidar, on Saturday PHOTO: SALAR

Staff member Tanneeru Venkateswara Rao provided information about the launch, noting that the balloon was part of a central government research initiative to study atmospheric conditions. An informational letter attached to the balloon urged anyone discovering it to avoid tampering and contact authorities immediately.

Though the balloon's descent caused anxiety, the situation was exacerbated when a young villager sustained a minor injury from the falling equipment and was admitted to hospital. Police reported that TIFR officials visited the site, compensated the injured party, and took the balloon for further analysis. Authorities reassured villagers that such research balloons are launched seasonally for environmental testing, emphasising there was no cause for alarm. *—PTI/Salar News*

City police tightens security around banks and ATMs

BENGALURU, 18 JAN

In the wake of recent robberies in Bidar and Mangaluru, Bengaluru Police Commissioner B Dayananda on Saturday directed police inspectors across the City to intensify security measures around banks and ATMs here.

The decision comes after a brazen daylight robbery in Bidar on Thursday, where armed assailants shot and killed two security guards before fleeing with a trunk containing Rs 92 lakh meant for refilling an SBI ATM. A day later, on Friday, another armed group looted jewellery and valuables worth Rs 4 crore from the Kotekar Vyavasaya Seva Sahakara Sangha, a cooperative society on the outskirts of Mangaluru.

Following a meeting between the senior police officials across the state, Police Commissioner Dayananda tasked the police inspectors with compiling detailed reports on the number of security personnel deployed at banks, specifying day and night shift arrangements within their jurisdiction. Police officials are required to visit banks personally.

The officers have also been instructed to ensure that all CCTV cameras at banks and ATMs are operational. Faulty systems are to be repaired promptly. Hoysala patrol teams have been directed to intensify their presence near banks and ATMs, especially during cash refilling operations. *—Salar News*

Delhi police register 285 cases of MCC violations

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Delhi Police registered 285 cases of violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) since it came into force after the Delhi assembly polls were announced, an official said on Saturday. Between January 7-17, 10,764 people were arrested under various provisions, including the Excise Act, according to a statement. Police have intensified vigilance at border checkpoints and crackdowns on illegal activities, including the smuggling of arms, liquor and drugs, the statement added. Since the MCC came into effect on 7 January, Delhi Police recorded 285 cases of alleged MCC violations and confiscated 172 illegal firearms and 140 cartridges, it said —*PTI*

Tejashwi lashes at Nitish over remarks on women's attire

PATNA, 18 JAN

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav has strongly condemned Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar for remarks suggesting women's fashion in the state has improved since he took office two decades ago. During a "Pragati Yatra" event in Begusarai, Kumar noted, "Girls have become so confident. They speak so well and dress so well. Did we see them wearing such fine clothes earlier?" In response, Yadav, who serves as the Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly, shared a video clip of Kumar's comments on social media, along with an impassioned post using the hashtag "ShameOnNitish." He reminded Kumar that he is not a "women's fashion designer" and emphasised that women in Bihar have always dressed with dignity and self-respect. Yadav accused Kumar of having a warped perspective and termed his comments a direct insult to women, who constitute half the population.—*PTI*

MLC Satish Chavan rejoins Ajit Pawar's NCP

SHIRDI, 18 JAN

Satish Chavan, a Member of the Legislative Council (MLC), has rejoined the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) led by Maharashtra's Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, following a short-lived alliance with the rival NCP (Sharad Pawar faction). Chavan initially switched to the rival faction in October 2024 after being expelled from Ajit Pawar's group for alleged "anti-party activities." His return to the NCP was marked by the revocation of his expulsion in the presence of Ajit Pawar and other party leaders. Chavan, who previously sided with Ajit Pawar during the NCP split in 2023, contested the state assembly elections in Vaijapur under the Sharad Pawar faction's banner but was unsuccessful. He is a three-time MLC representing the Aurangabad graduates constituency—*PTI*

Shah orders team to investigate Rajouri deaths

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has ordered the constitution of an inter-ministerial team to visit a village in Jammu and Kashmir's Rajouri district to ascertain the causes of deaths in three incidents in the past six weeks. The team will be headed by a senior Union home ministry officer and consist of experts from the ministries of health and family welfare, agriculture, chemicals and fertilisers, and water resources, according to an official statement. At least 16 people have died of a mysterious illness in the Budhal village of Rajouri district in the past 45 days. —*PTI*

AAP promises free water, electricity for renters

Delhi Cong says Kejri is recycling his old, unfulfilled promises

AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal with party leaders Sanjay Singh and Dilip Pandey addresses a press conference, in New Delhi, on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

AAP National Convenor Arvind Kejriwal announced on Saturday that his party would take decisive steps to extend the benefits of free electricity and water to tenants, if re-elected to power in Delhi.

Addressing a press conference here, Kejriwal highlighted concerns raised by tenants across Delhi. "Wherever I go, I meet people living on rent, who say that they benefit from good schools and hospitals but are deprived of the free electricity and water schemes," he said.

Reacting to it Delhi Congress president Devender Yadav claimed that in a desperate bid to salvage his eroded voter base, Kejriwal is recycling his old, unfulfilled promises to impress the voters.

Meanwhile, he alleged police prevented the screening of a documentary exposing the "secrets" and "conspiracies" behind the arrest of his party leaders.

A senior Delhi police office said no permission was sought for the screening event despite the Model Code of Conduct being in force in Delhi in view of the assembly polls on 5 February. But Kejriwal questioned why was permission needed for a private screening event. He told a press conference here the documentary -- Unbreakable -- was to be shown to the media at the private event, and it was not any political programme.

"No votes were going to be sought at the event neither anything was to be said against any party," Kejriwal said. —*PTI*

People protest as Sanjay Roy, accused in the alleged rape and murder of an on-duty doctor at RG Kar Hospital, is produced at court *PHOTO: PTI*

TMC demands death penalty for RG Kar convict

KOLKATA, 18 JAN

The Trinamool Congress (TMC) has expressed strong support for the conviction of Sanjay Roy, found guilty of the rape and murder of a doctor at RG Kar Medical College and Hospital. Senior TMC leaders have called for the death penalty to be imposed, arguing it would serve as a crucial deterrent against such heinous crimes.

A trial court in Sealdah delivered its verdict on Saturday, confirming that Roy, a civic volunteer, had raped and strangled the on-duty doctor on 9 August. The court is expected to announce the sentence on Monday. TMC MP Sougata Roy remarked that the punishment should be the harshest available, emphasising the need to restore public trust in law enforcement.

TMC leader Kunal Ghosh condemned attempts to politicise the investigation, highlighting that the Chief Minister had unequivocally condemned the crime and called for capital punishment. He pointed out that the Kolkata Police acted promptly, arresting Roy within 24 hours of the incident.

"This horrific act must be unequivocally denounced," Ghosh asserted, referencing the swift actions taken in subsequent similar cases where perpetrators received death sentences.

Meanwhile, Union Minister Sukanto Majumdar alleged that the evidence was "tampered with" by the Kolkata Police, upon which the CBI investigated the case. He also said that the victim might have known something that, would have caused problems for West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. BJP said that victim knew something, which would have "caused problems" for Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. —*PTI*

DOCTORS VOW TO PROTESTS

Doctors from various hospitals in Kolkata staged a protest rally here on Saturday expressing dissatisfaction with the conviction of prime accused Sanjay Roy in the RG Kar rape-murder case and demanded that the CBI bring to justice all those allegedly involved in the crime. "While Sanjay has been convicted, what about the other culprits? How could he have committed this crime alone? The CBI's probe was based on circumstantial evidence, but where is the place of occurrence? We still have unanswered questions," junior doctor Aniket Mahato said.The agitating doctors also questioned why the central probe agency did not file any supplementary chargesheet

PHOTO: PTI

Kerala Cong slams nod to firm tied to Delhi liquor scam

KOCHI, 18 JAN

Leader of the Opposition in Kerala Assembly V D Satheesan on Saturday criticised the left government in the state for permitting a company embroiled in the Delhi liquor policy scam, to start a brewery in Palakkad district.

Speaking to media, he also alleged that the project violates the government's new liquor policy.

"The company purchased the land in Palakkad two years ago, to set up a college, and its owner has been arrested in connection with the scam," he said.

Satheesan questioned why the government held secret discussions with the company and excluded others from the process.

Highlighting the severe groundwater scarcity in Palakkad, Satheesan accused Excise Minister M B Rajesh of jeopardising the drinking water needs of his own district by promoting the project.

The Excise Minister's statements on the matter were outright lies, he charged.

"Minister is trying to create an impression that there is a rift between me and Ramesh Chennithala. However, there is no such difference," Satheesan said.

"If any disagreement arises, we will resolve it through discussions," he added.

"Congress would launch strong agitation against the project," Satheesan said.

On Friday, M B Rajesh called the corruption charges levelled against the project as "politically motivated".

He said that both VD Satheesan and senior Congress leader Ramesh Chennithala were "competing with each other" to level the allegations "for political gains" and to "get an advantage within their party".

—*PTI*

BIHAR ASSEMBLY POLLS

Rahul Gandhi vows to defeat BJP-RSS ideology in Bihar

PATNA, 18 JAN

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has pledged to deliver an "ideological defeat" to the BJP-RSS alliance in Bihar, which is gearing up for assembly elections later this year. During his inaugural visit to the state post-Lok Sabha elections, Gandhi addressed party members at the historic Sadaqat Ashram and spoke at a 'Samvidhan Suraksha Sammelan'.

Gandhi encouraged Congress workers to engage tirelessly against the BJP-RSS ideology, asserting that Bihar, described as a "land of revolution," must resist the forces of violence and hatred. He highlighted ongoing issues such as rampant question paper leaks and high unemployment, referring to Bihar as a "factory of labourers."

Further, he claimed the Modi government has exacerbated wealth concentration while inadequately empowering Dalits, OBCs, and minorities. Gandhi bemoaned the lack of representation from these communities in top corporate and media positions.

He said caste survey conducted by the Nitish Kumar government in Bihar was an exercise to befool the people. said his party will stick to its demand for caste census as such an initiative is essential to plan development work in the country.

He also accused the BJP and the RSS of "undermining the Constitution and neglecting marginalised communities" in the country. —*PTI*

LoP in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi with students sitting on dharna demanding re-examination of the BPSC exam on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

J&K cops release pictures of 4 terrorists

JAMMU, 18 JAN

The Jammu and Kashmir Police on Saturday released pictures of four active terrorists in Kishtwar district and announced a reward of Rs 5 lakh each to anyone providing credible information on them.

Pictures of Saifullah, Farman, Adil and another terrorist, believed to be Basha, were made public through a poster in both Urdu and English.

"General public is requested to share any information regarding the individuals shown in the photographs, identified as four terrorists.

A reward of Rs 5 lakh for each terrorist will be given to anyone providing credible information about them," according to the poster.

Kishtwar and other districts in Jammu and Kashmir were rocked by terror attacks last year as Pakistan-based terrorist handlers continued their efforts to spread militancy to peaceful areas of the Jammu region. —*PTI*

PHOTO: x/@ SSPKISHTWAR

Saifullah, Farman, Adil and Unknown (Probably Basha)

SC asks TN, Guv to resolve differences over VC appointments

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

The Supreme Court has asked the Tamil Nadu government and the governor to resolve the issue of appointment of vice-chancellors in universities.

A bench of Justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan said it will intervene if the MK Stalin-led government and Governor RN Ravi fail to resolve the differences by the next date of hearing on 22 January.

"By the next date, if it is resolved well and good. Otherwise, we will resolve it," the bench said in an oral observation.The top court was hearing a plea filed by the Tamil Nadu government challenging the governor's actions on clearance of bills passed by the state assembly, appointment of ministers in the cabinet, and approval for search committees to recommend vice-chancellors in state universities. —*PTI*

Haryana Minister calls for BJP Chief's resignation

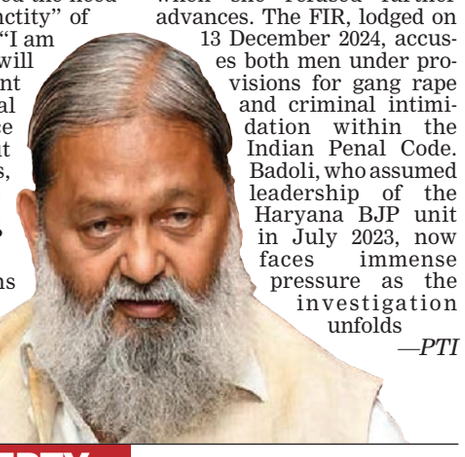
CHANDIGARH, 18 JAN

Haryana Minister Anil Vij has called for Mohan Lal Badoli, the state BJP chief, to step down while facing serious allegations of gang rape. Badoli and singer Rocky Mittal have been named in an FIR following a woman's accusations that they raped her in a hotel in Kasauli, Himachal Pradesh.

Speaking to reporters in Ambala, Vij stressed the need to uphold the "sanctity" of the party, stating, "I am confident that he will prove to be innocent in the Himachal Pradesh Police investigation. But until that happens, he should resign from his position as Haryana BJP chief."

The allegations against Badoli were described as "very serious" by Vij, who mentioned that the party's high command would be addressing the matter. Badoli has maintained his innocence amidst the ongoing investigation, which was launched after the woman claimed she met the two men under the pretext of securing a government job and a music video opportunity.

According to her complaint, after being coerced into consuming alcohol, she was raped when she refused further advances. The FIR, lodged on 13 December 2024, accuses both men under provisions for gang rape and criminal intimidation within the Indian Penal Code. Badoli, who assumed leadership of the Haryana BJP unit in July 2023, now faces immense pressure as the investigation unfolds —*PTI*



Hate speech row: HC judge skips Ram Temple seminar

MAHAKUMBH NAGAR, 18 JAN

Allahabad High Court Judge Justice Shekhar Yadav has cancelled his participation in an upcoming seminar on the Ram temple movement, scheduled for 22 January, after his prior speech at a Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) event stirred controversy last month.

The seminar, titled "Rashtriya Sangoshthi: Ram Mandir Aandolan aur Gorakshpeeth," is set to commemorate the first anniversary of the consecration ceremony of Lord Ram Lalla at the Ayodhya temple. Justice Yadav informed the organisers that he could not attend due to it being a working day.

Shashi Prakash Singh, the seminar convener, confirmed that Justice Yadav had initially consented to participate but later indicated his inability to do so. Justice Yadav's previous remarks at a VHP legal cell convention on 8 December, which discussed Uniform Civil Code, drew criticism and were labelled as "hate speech" by opposition. Supreme Court has sought a report on his statements from the Allahabad High Court. —*PTI*

TO ALLEVIATE POVERTY

Modi distributes 65 lakh property cards

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has distributed over 6.5 million property cards under the SVAMITVA scheme, aiming to enhance economic activities and alleviate poverty in rural areas. Speaking virtually at the event, Modi interacted with beneficiaries and highlighted the significance of digitising rural land for empowerment through technology and good governance.

The property cards have been distributed across more than 50,000 villages in ten states, including Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and the Union territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh. Following this distribution, a total of 22.4 million rural beneficiaries will hold SVAMITVA property cards.

The SVAMITVA scheme, launched in 2020, employs drones for mapping properties and provides legal documents to households in inhabited villages. Modi noted that, after obtaining legal rights, many individuals have successfully secured bank loans to start small businesses.

He anticipates that the full implementation of the scheme could unlock economic activities worth over Rs 100 lakh crore.He also mentioned the digitisation of land records, which has improved transparency and reduced corruption. —*PTI*

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during distribution of property cards under 'SVAMITVA' scheme, via video conferencing *PHOTO: PTI*

Civilian dead in Badamibagh cantonment fire

SRINAGAR, 18 JAN

A non-local civilian died in a fire incident inside the Badamibagh Army cantonment here on Saturday, officials said. The fire broke out in a civil canteen at the cantonment, resulting in damage to the structure, the officials said. They said a civil contractor, identified as Rajesh Kumar from Haryana, received burn injuries in the incident. He was shifted to the Army's 92 base hospital nearby, where he was declared dead, the officials said. The fire has been brought under control, they added. *—PTI*

Clash of farmers on India-B'desh border resolved: BSF

MALDA, 18 JAN

Tension erupted on the India-Bangladesh border on Saturday morning near a BSF border outpost after an altercation between farmers from both countries escalated into a brief clash, the paramilitary force said. However, prompt intervention by the Border Security Force (BSF) and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) ensured that the situation was swiftly brought under control, a BSF statement said. According to the BSF, the incident occurred around 11.45 am when Indian farmers working near the international border accused Bangladeshi farmers of stealing crops. The verbal argument quickly spiraled, with farmers from both sides gathering in large numbers, hurling abuses, and pelting stones at one another. The BSF further emphasised the importance of avoiding such disputes and advised Indian farmers to report any farming-related issues along the border directly to BSF personnel. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Met services key for development: WMO Chief

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Celeste Saulo, the head of the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), has praised India for its advanced meteorological and climate services, affirming their crucial role in national development. Speaking in an interview, Saulo highlighted the impact of robust weather services on various economic sectors, including logistics, tourism, energy, and agriculture. While India is at the forefront, many developing nations lag behind in integrating such services into their economies. Saulo emphasised the significance of weather forecasts in the renewable energy sector, remarking, "Energy transition needs a strong meteorological service." She acknowledged the India Meteorological Department's (IMD) 150th anniversary as a remarkable achievement. *—PTI*

Fog disrupts flight, trains in Delhi; AQI improves

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

A layer of fog enveloped Delhi on Saturday morning, reducing visibility and disrupting traffic movement. Other parts of North India also witnessed dense fog condition this morning. Due to fog, train and flight services disrupted in the national capital with some flights, and several trains being delayed at Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport and New Delhi railway station respectively. According to the India Meteorological Department, Meanwhile air quality in the national capital has improved. According to the Central Pollution Control Board, Delhi's Air Quality Index recorded at 248 at 7 am. An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good, 51 and 100 'satisfactory,' 101 and 200 'moderate,' 201 and 300 'poor,' 301 and 400 'very poor,' and 401 and 500 'severe. *—ANI*

Suspect in Saif's attack detained in Chhattisgarh

Khan suffered multiple stab wounds on his neck and spine

MUMBAI, 18 JAN

Two days after Bollywood star Saif Ali Khan was stabbed at his home during a robbery bid, a 31-year-old suspect was on Saturday detained from a train at Durg railway station in Chhattisgarh, officials said. The man, whose photo had been shared by Mumbai Police with the Railway Protection Force (RPF), was traveling by the Jnaneshwari Express which runs between Mumbai Lokmanya Tilak Terminus (LTT) to Kolkata Shalimar.

He was identified as Aakash Kailash Kannojia and a Mumbai police team would be reaching soon to take his custody, said an RPF official in Durg.

Saif Ali Khan, 54, grievously injured in the attack, was recovering well at Mumbai's Lilavati Hospital and could be discharged in two-three days, according to the doctors.

Mumbai Police, who had formed 30 teams to nab the assailant and recovered CCTV footage showing a suspect's face, informed RPF at Durg around 12.30 pm that the man was travelling by Jnaneswari Express.

Saif Ali Khan's alleged attacker purchase headphones after the stabbing incident
PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

On Friday, Mumbai Police had collected CCTV footage from a mobile shop in Dadar visited by the alleged suspect following the incident.

Saif was stabbed by the intruder multiple times during the incident early Thursday morning inside his 12th floor apartment at `Satguru Sharan' building in the upscale Bandra West area of Mumbai.

Khan's wife and actress Kareena Kapoor Khan has informed the police that the intruder who entered their house in Mumbai got aggressive during the scuffle but did not touch jewellery kept in the open, an official said on Saturday. Police recorded the actress's statement following the attack at the Bollywood star couple's apartment in Bandra in the early hours of Thursday, the official said.

Doctors said the Bollywood actor, who has been shifted out of the ICU, is able to walk and having normal diet. Maharashtra Minister of State for Home Yogesh Kadam has said that robbery was the motive and no underworld gang was involved. As per Dr Dange, Khan had four main wounds; two in the hand, one on the neck and "the most deep and dangerous" one in the spine. *—PTI*

India, US ink pact for cybercrime investigation probes

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Vinay Kwatra PHOTO: ANI

Days before it hands over power to President-elect Donald Trump, the Biden administration signed a pact with New Delhi that provides for boosting cooperation in combating cybercrime and related challenges such as terror financing and violent extremism.

The agreement on cybercrime investigations, signed in Washington on Friday, allows the agencies concerned of the two countries to step up the level of cooperation with respect to cyber threat intelligence and digital forensics, according to an Indian readout. It is the second such move in the last few days by the outgoing Biden administration that reflected the overall upward trajectory of relations between the two nations.

The US on Wednesday removed restrictions on three Indian nuclear entities -- Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Indira Gandhi Atomic Research Centre (IGCAR) and the Indian Rare Earths (IRE). The lifting of the restrictions is aimed at implementation of the historic India-US civil nuclear deal sealed around 16 years ago.

The Memorandum of Understanding or MoU on cybercrime investigations was signed by Indian Ambassador Vinay Kwatra and Acting US Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security Kristie Canegallo.

"Cybercrime has intricate linkages with the common security challenges faced by India and the US such as terrorism and violent extremism, terror financing, drug trafficking, organised crime, human trafficking, illegal migration, money laundering and transportation security," the MEA said in the readout. *—PTI*

Woman cop moves SC over Patna HC ruling in rape case

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

- The FIR was filed against IPS officer Pushkar Anand and his parents at the Mahila police station in Kaimur, Bihar, on 29 December 2014

A woman deputy superintendent of Bihar Police has appealed to the Supreme Court challenging a Patna High Court decision that dismissed an FIR against an IPS officer accused of raping her under the pretext of marriage.

The petition, presented by advocate Ashwani Kumar Dubey, is set to be heard by a bench of Justices Pankaj Mithal and Ahsanuddin Amanullah on Monday. The appeal contends that the high court's ruling, issued on 19 September 2024, is "perverse" and "devoid of any legal merits", arguing that it contradicts established legal principles and the facts of the case.

The FIR was filed against IPS officer Pushkar Anand and his parents at the Mahila police station in Kaimur, Bihar, on 29 December 2014. The woman officer claimed that after she joined as Dy SP in Bhabua, Anand, then the SP, began showing interest in her. Their relationship became physical but fell apart when claims regarding horoscope compatibility for marriage were cited.

The petition argues that the High Court overlooked Anand's authoritative position over the complainant, suggesting that he wielded influence over her. The plea emphasises that the FIR and chargesheet substantiate claims of criminal conduct. However, the high court ruled that the woman had willingly engaged in a relationship, declaring that the grounds for criminal charges were untenable. The outcome of the Supreme Court's deliberation could have implications for the case. *—PTI*

JALLIKATTU IN TN

Bullfighters try to tame a bull during a Jallikattu competition, in Trichy district, Tamil Nadu, on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

Jobs, border issues key to Viksit Bharat: Army Vice Chief

SURAT, 18 JAN

Vice Chief of the Army Staff, Lt Gen NS Raja Subramani, has outlined essential challenges India must confront to achieve Viksit Bharat by 2047. Speaking at the Surat LitFest 2025, he highlighted employment shortages, unresolved border disputes, and India's ranking on the human development index as key weaknesses.

He pointed to its geographical advantages, youth demographic, and the growth of sectors like pharmaceuticals and IT. He stressed the need for an integrated response mechanism to address internal conflicts, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, the Northeast, and issues related to left-wing extremism, to foster social harmony. *—PTI*

WB hospital death: 12 docs charged with homicide

KOLKATA, 18 JAN

PHOTO: X

- In a worrying development, four other women also fell critically ill after childbirth. While three remain in a very critical condition the fourth's condition has improved

Twelve doctors, including six postgraduate trainees, have been suspended and charged with culpable homicide in connection with the death of a woman after childbirth at a West Bengal state-run hospital. The incident involved the alleged administration of expired intravenous fluids.

A senior police officer confirmed that the medics have been booked under various sections of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), including Section 105 for culpable homicide not amounting to murder, which is a non-bailable offence with a potential penalty of up to ten years in prison. Additional charges include endangering human safety and public servants disobeying the law with intent to cause harm.

An FIR was filed at Kotwali Police Station following a complaint from the deceased woman's family. The state government suspended the twelve doctors at Midnapore Medical College and Hospital after a 13-member expert committee and the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) deemed them negligent in carrying out their duties. In a worrying development, four other women also fell critically ill after childbirth due to the same incident. While three remain in a very critical condition at SSKM Hospital, the fourth patient's condition has improved, according to health officials. *—PTI*

Singapore President visits Konark temple

BHUBANESWAR, 18 JAN

Singapore President Tharman Shanmugaratnam on Saturday visited Raghurajpur artists' village and the Sun Temple at Konark in Odisha's Puri district on the second day of his tour to the state.

Accompanied by the First Lady of Singapore, Shanmugaratnam spent more than an hour at Raghurajpur heritage village and purchased two Pattachitra paintings, one on the theme of Ramayana and another on Lord Ganesh.

"The President of Singapore enquired about the history and origin of Pattachaitra paintings and asked how we create such artwork," said Prasant Kumar Subudhi, an artist and a member of the Raghurajpur Craftsmen Committee.

Later, Shanmugaratnam visited the 13th-century Sun Temple at Konark where he was received by officials of the state government and the Archeological Survey of India (ASI). *—PTI*

3 workers' bodies found in Odisha cement plant collapse

BHUBANESWAR, 18 JAN

The bodies of three missing labourers were on Saturday recovered from the debris of a collapsed iron structure on the premises of a cement plant in Odisha's Sundergarh district, after a 36-hour rescue operation, police said.

The deceased have been identified as Susanta Rout, 58, Ranjit Bhol, 24, and Dashrath Patra, 42, who were engaged by a contractor at the captive power plant in Rajgangpur, they said.

The workers were trapped after a coal hopper – a big iron structure used for storing large quantities of coal – collapsed on Thursday evening, said Brijesh Kumar Rai, DIG, Western Range (Rourkela).

The coal hopper was operated by a third-party vendor engaged by Dalmia Cement, the company had earlier said in a statement.

According to officials, over 60 other workers were safely rescued on the day of the accident PHOTO: PTI

Over 60 other workers were safely rescued on the day of the accident, officials said.

Personnel of the fire service department, Odisha Disaster Rapid Action Force (ODRAF) and local police teams carried out the rescue operation.

Further investigation is underway. *—PTI*

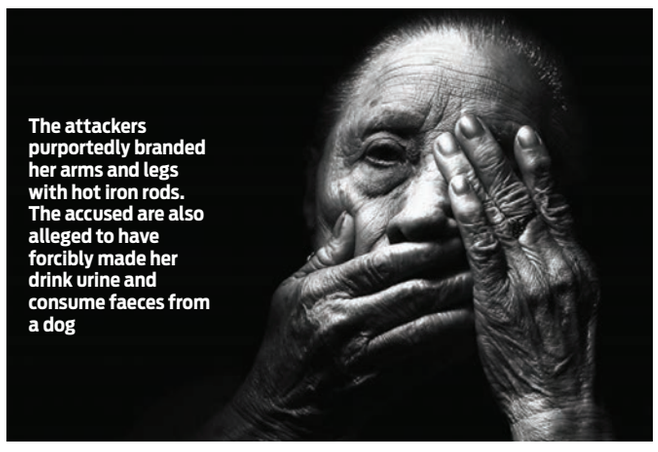
PARADED THROUGH VILLAGE

Andhra woman thrashed over 'black magic'

AMRAVATI, 18 JAN

A 77-year-old woman in Maharashtra's Amravati district was allegedly subjected to horrific abuse by her neighbours, who accused her of practising black magic. The incident occurred on 30 December in Retyakheda village, situated in the Chikhaldara taluka. A police complaint was only lodged earlier this month after the victim's son and daughter-in-law reported the incident to senior officials.

According to the complaint, the elderly woman was home alone when she was violently accosted by local villagers who accused her of witchcraft. It is alleged that she was struck with wooden sticks, slapped, and brutally thrashed. In a shocking escalation, the attackers purportedly branded her arms and legs with hot iron rods. She was forced to drink urine and consume faeces from a dog. Following the abuse, the victim was reportedly paraded through the village with a garland made of slippers around her neck.


The attackers purportedly branded her arms and legs with hot iron rods. The accused are also alleged to have forcibly made her drink urine and consume faeces from a dog

According to the complaint, the elderly woman was home alone when she was violently accosted by local villagers PHOTO: PIXABAY

Her son and daughter-in-law learned of the attack on 5 January and promptly contacted authorities to file a report. Amravati Superintendent of Police Vishal Anand described the incident as serious and confirmed that a police official has been dispatched to investigate the claims. He assured that appropriate action would be taken in response to the findings. Anand also stated that the police would review the actions of the local station to determine whether there was any attempt to cover up the incident, pledging that consequences would follow if any negligence was found. *—PTI*

Actor Balakrishna's fans booked for beheading goat

TIRUPATI, 18 JAN

Andhra Pradesh Police arrested five people for allegedly decapitating a ram (male sheep) at a movie theatre here before the screening of 'Daaku Maharaj' movie on 12 January, said an official on Saturday. Acting on a complaint from the People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), sent by email, police arrested Shankaraiah, Ramesh, Suresh Reddy, Prasad and Mukesh Babu for beheading the ram and smearing its blood on the wall poster of the actor N Balakrishna, who did lead role in the movie. A popular Tollywood actor and Hindupur MLA Balakrishna is brother-in-law of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu. "An email came from PETA. They lodged the complaint through email to the SP. On that day (January 16) we conducted an enquiry and registered a case in Tirupati east police station," Tirupati East sub-divisional police officer Venkat Narayana told PTI.

Narayana said police are also on the lookout for other people who are suspected to have been a part of this animal sacrifice.

A video of the decapitation went viral in which hundreds of onlookers and moviegoers were seen cheering and capturing the act on their cell phones as one of the accused persons heaved a sickle to behead the animal.

According to police, the ram was sacrificed around 3am on 12 January when the Balakrishna-starrer movie was released to coincide with Sankranti festival. *—PTI*

R-DAY PARADE REHEARSALS

Security personnel during rehearsals for the Republic Day parade, at Kartavya Path in New Delhi on Saturday
PHOTO: PTI

Israel awaits hostages' return amid uncertainty

Israel is preparing for the return of the hostages from Gaza with the expectation that many are likely to have severe, life-threatening complications after more than a year in captivity in the Gaza Strip.

While it's impossible to know the exact conditions in which hostages have been held, the Health Ministry and the Hostages Family Forum, which represents families of the hostages, are preparing for several different scenarios based on information gathered from hostages previously released or rescued.

Hamas militants abducted about 250 people during a cross-border attack on 7 Oct, 2023, that also left 1,200 people dead. About 100 hostages are still being held, though Israel believes a third of them are no longer alive.

The war that followed the attack has killed more than 46,000 Palestinians, according to Gaza health officials, who do not distinguish between civilians and militants but say women and children make up more than half of those killed.

Hagai Levine, who heads the health team at the Hostages Families Forum, said he expects the hostages to return with cardiovascular and respiratory issues due to lack of ventilation in the tunnels. Among multiple other afflictions Levine expects are vitamin deficiencies, starvation, dramatic weight loss, vision problems due to a lack of sunlight, broken bones, cognitive impairment and mental health trauma.

As a result, doctors are expecting the hostages will require longer and more complex medical and mental health interventions than did those who returned after the last ceasefire in November 2023, said Dr Einat Yehene, a psychologist at the Hostages Families Forum who oversees the captives' rehabilitation.

Complex medical challenges

Doctors are keenly aware of the challenges they face in treating the surviving hostages. One of them is "refeeding syndrome," when exposure to certain foods or too much food can lead to profound health complications and even death in those with prolonged vitamin and nutritional deficiencies, said Dr Hagar Mizrahi, head of the Ministry of Health's medical directorate.

Doctors are expecting the hostages will require longer and more complex medical and mental health interventions than did those who returned after the last ceasefire in November 2023 ***PHOTO: PTI***

The Red Cross team that will transfer the hostages from Gaza to Egypt and the small Israeli military medical team that will meet the hostages at the border as they cross into Israel have strict guidelines for what the hostages can eat in their first few hours, Mizrahi said.

Six hospitals are preparing to receive hostages, including two in the south, closer to Gaza, that will treat those with acute medical issues, health ministry officials said.

Yehene said the public should not expect joyful reunions like those seen following the last ceasefire, when released hostages ran through hospital halls into the ecstatic embraces of their loved ones.

"Given the physical and emotional conditions, we expect emotional withdrawal symptoms, such as maybe exhaustion, fatigue — and some will probably need assistance with their mobility," she said.

Medical officials are also prepared for the possibility that returning hostages will need speech therapy, especially if they have been kept in isolation, Yehene noted. She said some might be so traumatized or in shock from the transfer to Israel that they will be unable to speak at all.

To minimise the hostages' trauma and allow them to acclimate to their new reality, officials will try to limit the number of people who interact with them and have made accommodations to lessen their sensory stimulation, such as stripping down the hospital rooms and changing the lighting.

Israel's Ministry of Social Welfare has also planned temporary housing solutions if hostages feel unable to return directly from the hospital to their home.

The hostages don't owe you anything'

Experts are pleading with the news media and the public to give the hostages and their families privacy, despite intense interest in their plight.

"The first days back are really holy, when a person finally gets to meet with their family, and everyone else needs to take a step back," said Ofrit Shapira, a psychoanalyst who heads a group of health professionals treating freed hostages, their families, and survivors of the Oct. 7 attack.

Hospital wings housing the hostages are expected to be "sterilized," closed to all but direct family and doctors, to keep the public and news outlets away, medical officials have said.

Some of the previously freed hostages and their families have volunteered to help counsel those now going through the same process, Levine said. He noted the strength of the bonds created between the relatives of the hostages, and between the released hostages, who have become like "psychological families" helping each other adapt and heal, he said.

Many released hostages are neglecting their own rehabilitation because they are so wrapped up in the fight to bring the others home, Levine said.

A big priority is also to provide support for the families of hostages who did not survive.

Israel has confirmed the deaths of at least a third of the approximately 90 remaining captives. But Hamas has not confirmed the status of the 33 who are expected to be freed in the first stage of the ceasefire. Some might no longer be alive.

"This moment of releases is an emotional and psychological for something they were supposed to experience, and they never will experience, because this deal took too long," Yehene said. *—PTI*

SALAR ساہر

Street plays, cricket: Parties Delhi poll push

As Delhi Assembly elections approach, political activity had intensified with smaller parties like AIMIM, BSP and others in the city engaging voters through grassroots campaigns including street plays, wall paintings, and cricket matches with children.

Delhi will go to polls on 5 February, with the ruling AAP, BJP, and Congress dominating the political landscape.

However, parties with significant influence in other states, such as Asaduddin Owaisi's All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM), Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP), and Munish Kumar Raizada's Bharatiya Liberal Party (BLP), are working to expand their presence in the national capital.

The AIMIM has launched an intensive door-to-door campaign, particularly in Okhla, where its candidate Shafa-ur-Rehman and his wife are leading outreach efforts, along with student activists from Jamia Milia Islamia and former Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and National Register of Citizens (NRC) protester.

"Family members, the student wing from Jamia, activists from the CAA-NRC protests, and party leaders are conducting a robust door-to-door campaign. Shafa-ur-Rehman, our candidate from Okhla, and his wife, along with party members, are effectively leading the outreach," AIMIM Delhi party president Shoaib Jamai told PTI.

Nukkad Sabhas (street meetings) are also being held regularly and the party has prioritised social media as part of its strategy, he said.

"We have a dedicated social media team highlighting past statements and actions of AAP MLA Amantullah Khan while also showcasing videos of areas lacking development to present a real picture to the voters," Jamai said.

BLP chief and candidate from New Delhi constituency, who was once a friend of Kejriwal, Munish Kumar Raizada, has focused on a grassroots-level campaign. His team has been actively visiting JJ clusters, all 16 Dhobi Ghats, Muslim colonies, and Valmiki Sadan, conducting door-to-door outreach.

Additionally, the party is using wall paintings, distributing pamphlets, billboards, and stickers, and leveraging their Facebook and Instagram handles to reach a wider audience.

"We are not relying on AI-generated content, movies, or songs like other parties. Our creative slogans and campaign songs are connecting with the people," Raizada said, emphasizing on the authenticity of their campaign.

Among the slogans, "Samaya nahi, Samadhan chuniye; Delhi mein Khuda chuniye" is one that has resonated strongly with locals, calling for change and action in the face of a stagnant political climate.

When not engaging with voters, Raizada and his team play cricket with children in the JJ clusters, which has earned him the affectionate title of "Doctor Uncle."

"It's not just about politics, it's about being with the people, listening to their issues, and helping in any way I can," he said, noting that he has used his medical expertise to assist locals in need of health support.

Raizada's team conducts 8-9 Nukkad Nataks (street plays) weekly, addressing key issues like corruption, unemployment, and development.

The BSP, which plans to contest all 70 seats in the Delhi Assembly elections, has adopted a traditional approach to connect with the voters.

The party is focusing on door-to-door campaigning, supported by senior party leaders and conducting Nukkad meetings, Central Coordinator of the BSP Nitin Singh told PTI.

Along with posters and pamphlets, the party is utilizing media to reach out to people.

Singh said, "We are not engaging in the social media game like other parties. Instead, we are taking the traditional approach, connecting with people on a personal level and promoting our campaign in a raw, grassroots manner."

The final deadline fort candidates to submit their nomination papers to the respective returning officers was 17 January. *—PTI*

Delhi will go to polls on 5 February, with the ruling AAP, BJP, and Congress dominating the political landscape ***PHOTOS: PTI***

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

What will happen to TikTok on Apple, Google's app store from today?

- With President-elect Donald Trump adding uncertainty around whether a TikTok ban will go into effect, the focus is now turning to companies like Google and Apple that are expected to take the popular video sharing app off their platforms in just two days.
- Though the Supreme Court on Friday unanimously upheld a federal law that could ban TikTok nationwide, it's unclear how a shutdown of the popular social media platform will play out and what Americans will see when the clock strikes midnight on Sunday.
- The court decision comes against a backdrop of unusual political agitation by Trump, who vowed that he could negotiate a solution after he takes office, and the administration of President Joe Biden, which has signaled it won't enforce the law beginning Sunday, his final full day in office. Now, tech observers — and some users — are intently watching to see what happens over the weekend and beyond.
- "We're really in uncharted territory here in terms of tech policy," said Sarak Kreps, the director of Cornell University's Tech Policy Institute.
- Under the law, mobile app stores — like the ones operated by Apple and Google — and internet hosting services will face major fines if they continue to distribute the platform to US users beyond the deadline for divestment from ByteDance, TikTok's China-based parent company. The companies could pay up to $5,000 for each user who continues to access TikTok, meaning penalties could total to a large sum.
- A lawyer representing TikTok told Supreme Court justices last week that the platform will "go dark" on Jan 19 if the law isn't struck down. But TikTok, which is not required to block its own platform under the statute, has not said whether it will limit access to the app, or its website, on Sunday. Experts have noted TikTok's app should remain available for current users, but existing ones will no longer be able to update it, making it unusable in the long term.
- Trump's national security adviser has signaled this week that the incoming administration may take steps to "keep TikTok from going dark," though what that looks like — and if any of those steps can withhold legal scrutiny — remains unclear.
- "My decision on TikTok will be made in the not-too-distant future, but I must have time to review the situation," Trump said Friday in a post on Truth Social after the court's ruling. Earlier in the day, he said in another post that TikTok was among the topics in his conversation with Chinese leader Xi Jinping.
- In the meantime, some of the attention has turned to tech companies, such as Apple, Google and Oracle, who currently offer TikTok on their app stores or host company data on their servers.
- Tech CEOs have been attempting to forge friendlier ties with Trump, who wants to put the TikTok ban on hold, since he was elected in November. But Kreps said it would "defy credulity" for them to continue to offer TikTok, even if they want to please Trump, since it would open them up to punitive fines.
- Apple, Google and Oracle did not respond to questions sent this week about their plans on TikTok

Tech CEOs have been attempting to forge friendlier ties with Trump, who wants to put the TikTok ban on hold, since he was elected in November ***PHOTOS: FREEPIK***

Tech companies are also used to removing apps at the behest of governments. In 2023, Apple says it removed nearly 1,500 apps globally. Nearly 1,300 of the apps were made in China.

"Penalties for companies like Apple and Google could run as high as $850 billion," Sen Tom Cotton, R-Ark, wrote on X on Thursday, while referring to the US TikTok law. "Not sure I'd take a politician's word if I ran those companies."

Meanwhile, David Choffnes, executive director of the Cybersecurity and Privacy Institute at Northeastern University in Boston, said he believes there's a "small chance" that nothing happens to TikTok, but acknowledged that would require "enormous risk on the on the part of the companies that support them."

Apple, Google and Oracle did not respond to questions sent this week about their plans on TikTok.

In a video after the court ruling, TikTok CEO Shou Chew, who is expected to attend Trump's inauguration and be granted a prime seating location on the dais, thanked the president-elect for "his commitment to work" with TikTok to "find a solution" that keeps the platform available.

"We are grateful and pleased to have the support of a president who truly understands our platform — one who has used TikTok to express his own thoughts and perspectives, connecting with the world and generating more than 60 billion views of his content in the process," Chew said.

In a letter sent Friday to Biden and Attorney General Merrick Garland, an attorney for TikTok creators who sued the government asked the administration to pause enforcement of the law "until there is further definitive guidance."

"In addition, we request that you clarify that no app store, internet hosting service, or other provider faces any risk of enforcement or penalties with respect to TikTok, CapCut, or any other ByteDance apps, until such further guidance has been issued," said the letter by attorney Jeffrey Fisher. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Yoon argues for release as court reviews arrest

SEOUL, 18 JAN

South Korea's impeached president on Saturday argued for his release before a Seoul judge as the court reviewed whether to grant a law enforcement request for his formal arrest. Yoon, who has been in detention since he was apprehended on Wednesday in a massive law enforcement operation at his residence, faces potential rebellion charges linked to his declaration of martial law on December 3, which set off the country's most serious political crisis since its democratisation in the late 1980s. The Corruption Investigation Office for High-Ranking Officials, which is leading a joint investigation with police and the military, requested the Seoul Western District Court to grant a warrant for Yoon's formal arrest. *—PTI*

Nigeria admitted as partner country of BRICS bloc

ABUJA, 18 JAN

Nigeria has been admitted as a "partner country" of the BRICS bloc of developing economies, according to Brazil, the group's chair. BRICS was formed by Brazil, Russia, India and China in 2009, with South Africa added in 2010, as a counterweight to the Group of Seven (G-7) leading industrialised nations. Last year, the bloc added Iran, Egypt, Ethiopia and the UAE, while Saudi Arabia has been invited to join. Turkey, Azerbaijan and Malaysia have formally applied to become BRICS members, while a few others have also expressed interest. Nigeria becomes the ninth BRICS partner country, joining Belarus, Bolivia, Cuba, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Thailand, Uganda, and Uzbekistan. *—PTI*

UN unveils new plan to combat Antisemitism surge

UNITED NATIONS, 18 JAN

The United Nations has unveiled a new initiative aimed at tackling the rising tide of antisemitism globally. Miguel Moratinos, head of the UN Alliance of Civilisations, expressed concern over the surge in antisemitic attacks, particularly following the 7 October assaults in Israel. Key elements include training for UN personnel on antisemitism and Holocaust denial, along with the establishment of a working group to assess the effectiveness of measures introduced. US officials affirmed the importance of implementing the plan to ensure meaningful progress in combating antisemitism globally. *—PTI*

SL Arugambay plotters sought ex-LTTE aid: Cops

COLOMBO, 18 JAN

Authorities in Sri Lanka have thwarted a plot intended to attack tourists at a surfing resort on the eastern coast. Police revealed that the suspects—a local resident and two Maldivians—were planning to enlist former terror suspects, including one linked to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The foiled plan emerged after the US embassy in Colombo issued a travel warning on 23 October, citing credible threats against tourists in Arugam Bay, particularly targeting Israeli nationals. Police disclosed that the conspiracy was orchestrated within Colombo's prison system, involving contacts with individuals previously convicted of terrorism. In addition to the three main suspects, six others were arrested for surveying the site for the attackers, while Interpol has issued red notices for two additional suspects—one Afghan and another Maldivian. *—PTI*

Palestinian Prez says ready to govern Gaza

Palestinian leaders reject outside interference, say Gaza's future is theirs to decide

GAZA, 18 JAN

Palestine's President Mahmoud Abbas has said that the Palestinian Authority (PA) was ready to assume "full responsibility" in post-war Gaza, in his first statement since a ceasefire deal was announced between Israel and Hamas.

"The Palestinian government, under president Abbas' directives, has completed all preparations to assume full responsibility in Gaza," a presidency statement said on Friday.

It would include the return of the displaced, providing basic services, crossings management and reconstruction of the war-torn territory.

The statement, published by the Palestinian Wafa news agency, also reiterated the call of Abbas's government "of the necessity of an immediate ceasefire in and full Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip".

While Hamas has exercised full control in Gaza since 2007, the PA, dominated by the Fatah movement, runs the West Bank which has been occupied by the Israeli forces.

Currently, Israel has no definitive stance on post-war governance beyond rejecting any role for both Hamas and the PA.

Israeli officials, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, have repeatedly opposed Hamas or the PA ruling the Palestinian territory, describing either scenario as "a reward" for the 7 October, 2023 attack. However, outgoing US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said last week that the PA should run the coastal territory.

Palestinian leaders across factions have long said that Gaza's future is for them to decide, rejecting any outside interference.

On Friday, Palestine's Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa said government institutions were ready to step up their work and restore basic services in Gaza, while calling on the European Union (EU) to redeploy a monitoring mission to the Rafah border crossing and help facilitate the entry of aid.

"The Palestinian ministers have clear instructions on what to do from the moment the ceasefire begins. We have a 100-day plan for the day after," Mustafa was quoted by the Belga News Agency as saying during his trip to Brussels. *—Agencies*

Mahmoud Abbas
PHOTO: X

> The Palestinian government, has completed all preparations to assume full responsibility in Gaza like return of the displaced and providing basic services
>
> -Mahmoud Abbas

KEY EVENTS IN CEASEFIRE NEGOTIATIONS

In a breakthrough after months of stalled talks, Israel and Hamas have agreed to a historic ceasefire and hostage release deal, which is set to take effect on 19 January.

2023

1. **7 OCT:** Hamas attacks Israel, killing 1,200 and taking 251 hostages. Israel responds with airstrikes.
2. **27 OCT:** Israel begins a ground invasion, causing massive destruction and 46,000 deaths.
3. **21 NOV:** Hamas frees 105 hostages for 240 prisoners in a US-brokered deal. Ceasefire collapses.
4. **28 DEC:** Talks resume for a new ceasefire and hostage deal.

2024:

5. **31 MAY:** Biden proposes a three-phase ceasefire plan tied to hostage release.
6. **10 JUN:** UN supports Biden's ceasefire plan.
7. **31 JUL:** Talks stall after Israel kills Hamas leader Haniyeh.
8. **17 OCT:** Israel kills another Hamas leader, Yahya Sinwar.
9. **9 NOV:** Qatar pauses mediation after no progress.
10. **27 NOV:** Israel's ceasefire with Hezbollah raises hopes for a Gaza deal.
11. **2 DEC:** Trump warns Gaza hostages must be freed before his presidency begins.
12. **17 DEC:** Both sides hint at nearing an agreement.

2025:

13. **13 JAN:** Biden and Netanyahu discuss finalizing the deal.
14. **15 JAN:** Qatar announces a ceasefire and hostage release deal, effective 19 Jan.
15. **17 JAN:** Israel's cabinet approves the deal.

4 killed in Russian drone and missile attack on Kyiv

KYIV, 18 JAN

In a violent escalation of hostilities, Russia launched a significant aerial assault on the Ukrainian capital on Saturday, deploying a barrage of drones and missiles that resulted in at least four fatalities. The Ukrainian air force reported that 39 Shahed drones, along with additional simulators and four ballistic missiles, were fired in the early hours of the morning.

Ukrainian air defence successfully intercepted two missiles and 24 drones, although debris from a downed missile tragically claimed four lives in the Shevchenkivskyi district, confirmed Timur Tkachenko, head of the Kyiv City Military Administration. The attack caused widespread destruction, including broken windows and damage to a water supply pipeline, as firefighters battled blazes ignited by the assault. Eyewitnesses reported a man lying dead amid the rubble, with water flooding the streets.

Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko indicated that the Lukyanivska metro station had to be temporarily closed due to damage from the air raid, particularly to its glass entrance.

Throughout the country, f aerial skirmishes were reported, with drones and missiles being shot down across Poltava, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk. Ukrainian drone strikes ignited industrial sites in Russia's Kaluga and Tula regions. Local officials described fires at an oil depot in Lyudinovo and a fuel storage tank in Tula, though no casualties were reported from these incidents. Russia's defence ministry claimed to have destroyed 46 Ukrainian drones overnight. *—PTI*

Police officers collect evidence following a Russian missile attack in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Saturday
PHOTO: PTI

Hasina claims she was close to death while fleeing B'desh

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Deposed Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has revealed that she and her sister, Sheikh Rehana, narrowly escaped death by 20 to 25 minutes on 5 August 2024, when her government was overthrown during a mass uprising led by students.

In a heartfelt audio message shared on her party's Facebook page, the 77-year-old Hasina expressed her gratitude to God for her survival. She recounted previous assassination attempts, asserting that divine intervention has allowed her to live and continue her work for the nation.

"We escaped death by just 20-25 minutes. I believe there must be a will of Allah, as otherwise, I wouldn't have survived," Hasina said in Bangla, reflecting on her near-misses during the infamous 21 August, 2004 grenade attack and an earlier bomb threat in 2000.

Following the unrest, Hasina has been residing in India, having fled Bangladesh amid violent protests that ended her 16-year regime. "I am suffering, I am without my country, my home; everything has been burned," she lamented.

Hasina condemned her opponents, accusing them of plotting to take her life. *—PTI*

Sheikh Hasina
PHOTO: ANI

AGAINST PRO-GOVT BIAS

People in Serbia protest in front of the state-run TV headquarters, in Belgrade against the broadcaster's pro-government bias. It comes a day after a student was hit by a car and seriously wounded
PHOTO: PTI

TRUMP INAUGURATION MOVED INDOORS

WASHINGTON DC, 18 JAN

President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration ceremony is moving indoors to the Capitol Rotunda because of expected dangerous cold temperatures in the nation's capital, Washington DC.

"There is an Arctic blast sweeping the Country," Trump wrote on his social platform, Truth Social. "Therefore, I have ordered the Inauguration Address, in addition to prayers and other speeches, to be delivered in the United States Capitol Rotunda," he said.

Much of North America is under a weather warning for extreme cold temperatures as an unusually strong polar vortex over northern Greenland is expected to make its way to the south.

As many as 80 million people are set to experience subzero temperatures at some point between this weekend and next week, and another 50 million people are set to experience temperatures below -10 degrees. *—DW News*

TikTok says it will 'go dark' unless govt acts

WASHINGTON DC, 18 JAN

TikTok said it will have to "go dark" this weekend unless the outgoing Biden administration assures the company it won't enforce a shutdown of the popular app after the Supreme Court on Friday unanimously upheld the federal law banning the app unless it's sold by its China-based parent company.

The Supreme Court in its ruling held that the risk to national security posed by TikTok's ties to China overcomes concerns about limiting speech by the app or its 170 million users in the United States.

The decision came against the backdrop of unusual political agitation by president-elect Donald Trump, who vowed that he could negotiate a solution, and the administration of President Joe Biden, which has signalled it won't enforce the law — which was passed with bipartisan support — beginning Sunday. *—PTI*

Vivek Ramaswamy to 'run' for Ohio Guv

WASHINGTON DC, 18 JAN

Indian American entrepreneur-turned-politician Vivek Ramaswamy plans to run for Ohio governor, multiple media reports said Friday. Ramaswamy, 39, who had an unsuccessful run in the Republican presidential race, is now a close confidant of President-elect Donlad Trump and Vice President-elect J D Vance. Trump has entrusted him, along with Tesla owner Elon Musk, with the task of reforming the governance.

Born to Indian parents in Cincinnati he plans to announce his decision to run for Ohio governor soon, The Washington Post reported quoting anonymous sources. *—PTI*

PROPERTY DAMAGE DUE TO BLAST

SpaceX Starship rocket grounded for probe

FLORIDA, 18 JAN

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has grounded SpaceX's prototype Starship rocket and ordered Elon Musk's company to conduct a "mishap investigation" before it can resume operations.

The spaceship dramatically disintegrated over the Caribbean on Thursday, undergoing what the company called "rapid unscheduled disassembly." In other words, a massive explosion.

In a statement, the FAA said it was "working with SpaceX and appropriate authorities to confirm reports of public property damage on (the islands of) Turks and Caicos."

Musk said preliminary indications are that leaking fuel built up pressure in the cavity above the engine firewall, causing the Starship to break apart during liftoff and expel trails of flaming debris.

Dramatic video taken near the Turks and Caicos Islands showed spacecraft debris raining down from the sky in a stream of fireballs. The FAA said it briefly activated a "Debris Response Area" protocol to slow aircraft outside the area where the debris was falling, or stop aircraft at their departure location. "Several aircraft requested to divert due to low fuel levels while holding outside impacted areas," it said. SpaceX has promised "a thorough investigation" in coordination with the FAA.

Starship is the biggest, most powerful rocket ever built, and is key to Musk's ambitions of colonising Mars.

NASA also hopes to use a modified version of the rocket as a human lunar lander for its Artemis missions to return to the Moon. *—DW News*

Starship is the biggest, most powerful rocket ever built, and is key to SpaceX CEO Elon Musk's ambitions of colonising Mars
PHOTO: PTI

2 Iranian Supreme Court judges killed in shooting

TEHRAN, 18 JAN

Ali Razini & Mohammad Moghiseh
PHOTO: X

Two senior justices in the Iranian Supreme Court have been killed in a shooting attack at the tribunal building in central Tehran, according to the judiciary and state media.

The "assassination" was carried out by an armed person, who killed himself after opening fire early on Saturday, according to a statement by the media centre of the judiciary.

The victims were identified as Hojjat al-Islam Razini and Hojjat al-Islam wal-Muslimeen Moqisseh, each of whom presided over a different branch of the court. "(They) were actively involved in combating crimes against national security, espionage, and terrorism," the statement added, describing the slain judges as "courageous and experienced". Judiciary spokesman Asghar Jahangir told the Iranian state television that "a person armed with a handgun entered the room" of the two judges and shot them. According to the state-owned Tehran Times, a bodyguard was also injured in the attack on Saturday, the first working day of the week in the Iranian calendar.

In 1998, Razini was also the subject of an attempted assassination attack while he was serving as head of Tehran's judiciary. *—Agencies*

PHOTO:INSTAGRAM

Numeros launches e-scooter Diplos Max

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Numeros Motors, a Bengaluru-based original equipment manufacturer, on Saturday launched the e-scooter Diplos Max, priced at Rs 1.09 lakh. Besides, it also unveiled a platform, a Bike-Scooter Crossover, which will target the millennials. Diplos Max is a platform for dual usage for a family. It has parallel changing capability charging the battery in less than 3- 4 hours. The company claims a range of 140 km IDC (Indian Driving Conditions) range and a 63 Kmph top speed. "This launch underscores our commitment to blending advanced technology with practical design to redefine the future of urban transportation," said Numeros Motors founder and CEO Shreyas Shibulal. Currently, Numeros Motors operates in 14 cities and plans to onboard 170 dealers by the end of FY25-26. *—PTI*

Vayve Mobility unveils solar EVA at ₹3.25 lakh

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

EV maker Vayve Mobility on Saturday launched its solar-powered electric vehicle EVA with prices starting from Rs 3.25 lakh to Rs 6 lakh (ex-showroom). The company is looking to start its commercial production from mid-next year, Vayve Mobility COO Vilas Deshpande said. He also said the delivery of the vehicles will start in the second half of 2026. Initially, he said, the vehicle will be available in select cities like Pune and Bengaluru. The vehicle has three variants - Niva, Stella and Vega. Pre-bookings have been started from this month. *—PTI*

Kotak Bank Q3 net profit rises 10% at ₹4,701 crore

MUMBAI, 18 JAN

Kotak Mahindra Bank on Saturday reported a 10.22 per cent rise in its December quarter consolidated net profit to Rs 4,701 crore. The city headquartered lender had reported a net profit of Rs 4,265 crore in the year-ago period and Rs 5,044 crore in the preceding September quarter. On a standalone basis, the private sector lender's net profit increased to Rs 3,304 crore from Rs 3,005 crore in the year-ago period but was marginally down when compared with the September quarter's Rs 3,343 crore. The total income increased to Rs 16,050 crore from Rs 14,096 crore in the year-ago period, while the expenses came at Rs 10,869 crore against Rs 9,530 crore. The Kotak Mahindra Bank scrip had closed 2.58 per cent down at Rs 1,758.65 apiece on the BSE on Friday against a 0.55 per cent correction on the benchmark. *—PTI*

JBM launches 4 new electric buses

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

JBM Electric Vehicles on Saturday launched four new electric buses here at Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, including Luxury Coach Galaxy. Besides, JBM Electric, part of JBM Group, has also launched an Intercity Bus Xpress, low Floor Electric Medical Mobile Unit e-MediLife, and India's first ever 9 Metre Electric Tarmac Coach e-SkyLife, enhancing its play in green mobility. According to the company, its new buses have modular battery packs to suit different routes and power saving. It has Ultra-fast charging for better operational efficiency with lithium-ion batteries and a thermal management system. JBM has sold over 1,800 electric buses across multiple geographies and has an "order book of 10,000+ electric buses deployed and under execution", it said. *—PTI*

Govt may introduce new income tax bill in Budget

FM asked for review of old Income Tax Act, 1961 in 6 months

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

The government, in the ensuing Budget session of Parliament, is likely to introduce a new income tax bill which seeks to simplify the current I-T law, make it comprehensible and reduce the number of pages by about 60 per cent.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her July Budget had announced a comprehensive review of the six-decade old Income Tax Act, 1961, within six months.

"The new Income Tax law will be introduced in the Budget session of Parliament. It will be a new law and not an amendment to the existing Act. Currently, the draft law is being vetted by the law ministry and it is likely to be brought in Parliament in the second half of the Budget session,"a source said.

The Budget session is scheduled from 31 January to 4 April. The first half will start with President Droupadi Murmu's address to the joint sitting of Lok Sabha and Raya Sabha followed by the tabling of the Economic Survey for 2024-25. The Union Budget for 2025-26 will be presented on 1 February.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in her July Budget had announced a comprehensive review of the six-decade old Income Tax Act, 1961, within six months

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman PHOTO: X

Pursuant to the Budget announcement by Sitharaman for a comprehensive review of the I-T Act, 1961, the CBDT had set up an internal committee to oversee the review and make the Act concise, clear, and easy to understand, which will reduce disputes, litigation, and provide greater tax certainty to taxpayers. Also, 22 specialised sub-committees were established to review various aspects of the Act.

Public inputs and suggestions were invited in four categories -- simplification of language, litigation reduction, compliance reduction, and redundant/obsolete provisions.

The Income Tax Department has received 6,500 suggestions from stakeholders on review of the Act.

Sources said the provisions and chapters will be significantly reduced and the obsolete provisions will be deleted.

Sitharaman had said in her July, 2024, Budget speech that the purpose of the review is to make the Act concise. *—PTI*

Electric vehicle sales in India crossed 14.08L in 2024: HDK

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Electric vehicle sales in India crossed 14.08 lakh units in 2024, achieving a market penetration rate of 5.59 per cent, up from 4.44 per cent in the previous year, Union Minister HD Kumaraswamy said on Saturday.

The minister asserted that the upward trend in EV adoption underscores the growing public trust in electric vehicles, as well as the positive impact of government incentives and industry innovation.

"Total EV sales in calendar year 2024 reached 14,08,245 - a penetration of 5.59 per cent, up from 10,22,994 in calendar year 2023, which stood at 4.44 per cent," the minister for Heavy Industries and Steel said at a Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA) event here.

HD Kumaraswamy PHOTO: PTI

He observed that despite global uncertainties, the country's automotive sector has continued on a growth trajectory.

"In the calendar year 2024, the industry collectively retailed 26.1 million vehicles, marking a robust 9 per cent year-on-year increase," Kumaraswamy said.

Talking about the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for the automobile and auto components industry, with a budgetary outlay of Rs 25,938 crore, the minister said that out of 115 applications, 82 have been approved, with an estimated investment of Rs 42,500 crore, incremental sales of Rs 2,31,500 crore, and the potential to create 1.4 lakh jobs over five years. *—PTI*

FTC SUES PEPSICO FOR FAVOURING WALMART

NEW YORK, 18 JAN

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has filed a lawsuit against PepsiCo, accusing the beverage giant of engaging in illegal price discrimination by providing unfair price advantages to a major retailer at the expense of other vendors and consumers.

Although the FTC did not name the retailer in its statement, a source familiar with the case, who wished to remain anonymous, revealed that it is Walmart.

PHOTO: X

PepsiCo strongly denied the allegations, labelling the lawsuit "wrong on the facts and the law" and asserting that it misunderstands how consumer product firms assist retailers in offering lower prices. "PepsiCo strongly disputes the FTC's allegations and the partisan manner in which the suit was filed. We will vigorously present our case in court," the company stated.

The FTC's complaint claims that PepsiCo has been making promotional payments to Walmart but not to large grocery chains or independent convenience stores. *—PTI*

Ashok Leyland unveils light commercial vehicle 'Saathi'

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Ashok Leyland has unveiled entry-level Light Commercial Vehicle Saathi at Bharat Mobility Global Expo, strengthening its play in the segment.

The Hinduja group firm has also presented GARUD 15, a multi-axle, front-engine 15-meter fully-built premium bus, a first in the country. It is designed specifically for long-distance intercity travel for India's diverse road conditions, with 42 sleeper berths.

Saathi is built on advanced LNT technology, with 45 HP and torque 110 Nm(newton meters) and has 24 per cent larger loading area with a payload capacity of 1,120 kg.

Priced at Rs 6.49 lakh, it has better mileage and its larger tyres ensure both exceptional performance and efficiency, Ashok Leyland claimed. *—PTI*

BMW expects sales to maintain growth in 2025

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

German luxury carmaker BMW is looking at double-digit sales growth this year having already reported record deliveries in 2024, its India Group President and CEO Vikram Pawah said on Saturday.

The company is also expecting its electric vehicle sales portfolio to go up this year.

In 2024, BMW Group India posted its best-ever annual car sales at 15,721 units, an 11 per cent growth over the previous year. The BMW brand registered 15,012 units while the MINI brand clocked 709 units in 2024.

The group's motorcycle brand, BMW Motorrad sold 8,301 units last year.

Asked if the company is looking at a similar growth as last year, Pawah said,"Thinking anything less than a double- digit growth will be understatement for India as a country itself. So absolutely, yes."

He noted that all segments -- entry, mid and luxury -- were witnessing growth at a very solid pace for the company in the Indian market.

On EV sales, he said BMW crossed the milestone of cumulative sales of 3,000 units in India in 2024.

BMW Motorrad on Saturday launched the all-new BMW R 1300 GS Adventure in the country with price starting at Rs 22.95 lakh (ex-showroom).

The adventure motorcycle will be available as a completely built-up unit and deliveries will commence from April 2025.

The company also launched the all-new X3 in the country priced at Rs 75.8 lakh. Locally produced at BMW Group Plant Chennai, the sports activity vehicle (SAV) will be available in the country in both petrol as well as diesel powertrains. *—PTI*

- The company also launched the all-new X3 in the country priced at Rs 75.8 lakh. SAV will be available in the country in both petrol as well as diesel powertrains

AT MOBILITY EXPO

JSW Motor launches MG Majestor SUV

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

JSW MG Motor India has unveiled the MG Majestor, marking the debut of India's first D+ segment SUV on the second day of the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. This new segment represents a vehicle size larger than compact cars but smaller than full-size vehicles.

In addition to the Majestor, the company showcased nine global models, including the IM5, IM6, MG HS, and MG7 Trophy Edition. As part of its exhibit, JSW MG Motor India demonstrated its advancements in CASE (Connected, Autonomous, Shared, and Electric) technologies.

"We are excited to showcase our pioneering initiatives in CASE technologies at the Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025, reaffirming our commitment to shaping the future of mobility. Our vision of Drive. Future is rooted in leveraging advanced technology to transform mobility into a sustainable, connected, and customer-centric experience," stated Rajeev Chaba, CEO Emeritus of JSW MG Motor India.

The IM5 is a luxury sedan, while the IM6 is an all-electric SUV featuring an advanced digital chassis and four-wheel steering system PHOTO: X

The company introduced a diverse range of powertrain options, including Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs), Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), and Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) models. The Majestor SUV boasts enhanced dimensions suited for both urban and off-road driving.

With impressive power and robust capabilities, the MG Majestor is designed to thrive in any environment, making it perfect for city driving and adventurous terrains

The IM5 is a luxury sedan, while the IM6 is an all-electric SUV featuring an advanced digital chassis and four-wheel steering system. *—PTI*

PARTNERSHIP LIKELY?

PHOTO: X

Hyundai eyes ties with TVS for last-mile mobility

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Hyundai Motor Company on Saturday said it is exploring partnership with TVS Motor Company to analyse last-mile mobility solutions for India.

The South Korean automaker is exploring to join hands with TVS to conceptualise development of advanced electric three-wheelers and micro four-wheelers in India.

The project seeks to contribute to India's mobility market and empower last-mile connectivity in Indian cities, the automaker said in a statement.

Besides, TVS will explore manufacturing and marketing the EVs, collaborating with Hyundai Motor with the aim of enhancing the mobility experience in India, it added.

While no binding agreements have been executed, Hyundai Motor is exploring the potential to offer design, engineering and technology, while TVS Motor will explore manufacturing and marketing of the vehicles convenience, sustainability and adaptability as part of India's dynamic transportation landscape.

Hyundai also unveiled concept models of advanced electric three-wheeler and micro four-wheeler at Bharat Mobility Global Expo 2025. The Expo is scheduled from January 17-22 in Delhi and Greater Noida.

"By combining Hyundai Motor's global expertise with our deep understanding of mobility solutions, we aim to develop next- generation micro-mobility solutions that redefine last-mile connectivity," said Sharad Mishra, President, Group Strategy, TVS Motor Company.

This potential collaboration reflects the company's commitment to innovation and sustainability, he added.

"With a shared vision, we are confident that this partnership under discussion will deliver impactful solutions that set new standards in design, engineering, technology, and quality," Mishra said. *—PTI*

LUFTHANSA ACQUIRES 41% OF ITA AIRWAYS

ROME, 18 JAN

Germany's Lufthansa Group has finalised its acquisition of Italian airline ITA Airways, marking the end of a prolonged period of uncertainty for Italy's former flagship carrier.

The Rs 325 million (USD 350 million) deal sees Lufthansa acquiring an initial 41 per cent stake in ITA, which was formerly known as Alitalia, from the Italian government. Full control is expected by 2033, with a total investment projected at Rs 829 million. The remaining 59 per cent will remain with the Italian Treasury for the time being.

This transaction follows a year-long investigation and approval from the European Commission, which mandated specific conditions to ensure fair competition. The Commission highlighted that Lufthansa, ITA, and its partners dominate many routes from Rome and Milan to North America.

As part of the deal, the merged entity is required to facilitate the entry of rival airlines on certain routes. *—PTI*

'Automobile industry will be number one soon'

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

India's automobile industry will be number one in the world in the next five years, Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said on Saturday, highlighting that the industry has created 4.5 crore jobs till now, the highest in the country.

Addressing a Federation of Automobile Dealers Association (FADA) event, the road transport and highways minister further said demand of Indian automobile products is very high globally.

Presently, size of the US automobile industry is Rs 78 lakh crore, followed by China (Rs 47 lakh crore) and India (Rs 22 lakh crore).

Gadkari further said when he took charge of the transport ministry in 2014, the size of the automobile industry was Rs 7.5 lakh crore and today its size is Rs 22 lakh crore.

According to the minister, the automobile industry has created 4.5 crore jobs till now -- the highest in the country.

The minister pointed out that out of all two-wheelers motorcycles manufactured in India. *—PTI*

Nitin Gadkari. PHOTO: PTI

VinFast to launch 2 electric SUVs in India this year

NEW DELHI, 18 JAN

Vietnamese electric vehicle manufacturer VinFast Auto announced on Saturday that it will introduce its two electric SUVs, the VF 7 and VF 6, into the Indian market later this year as part of its strategic entry into the country, which it identifies as having significant growth potential.

VinFast is investing USD 500 million in a manufacturing plant located in Tuticorin, Tamil Nadu, with the facility expected to be completed in the second half of 2025. Following its completion, the company aims to launch its electric models.

Pham Sanh Chau, CEO of VinFast Asia, confirmed during a press interaction that this year will see the launch of two products, emphasising a long-term vision that includes establishing a network of dealers, workshops, and charging points.

PHOTO: X

The company is in discussions with the Indian government regarding incentives under the recent electric vehicle policy, which offers benefits to foreign companies investing in manufacturing units. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Haaland signs new 10-year Manchester City contract: Club

LONDON, 18 JAN

Erling Haaland has signed a new 9.5-year deal at Manchester City that will keep him at the Etihad until 2034, the Premier League champions announced on Friday. The 24-year-old striker's existing deal was due to expire in June 2027 but he has now committed his future to the club for the next decade. The Norwegian joined City from Borussia Dortmund in 2022 and has scored 111 goals in 126 games for the club. "I am really happy to have signed my new contract and to be able to look forward to spending even more time at this great club," said Haaland. "Manchester City is a special club, full of fantastic people with amazing supporters, and it's the type of environment that helps bring the best out of everybody. City's outgoing director of football Txiki Begiristain said: "Everyone at the club is delighted that Erling has signed his new contract.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Manchester United and Scotland great Denis Law dies at 84

LONDON, 18 JAN

Former Manchester United and Scotland forward Denis Law has died at the age of 84, the Premier League club said on Friday. "It is with a heavy heart that we tell you our father, Denis Law has sadly passed away. He fought a tough battle, but finally, he is now at peace," a family statement shared by United said. "We would like to thank everyone who contributed to his wellbeing and care, past and much more recently. "We know how much people supported and loved him and that love was always appreciated and made a difference. Thank you."—*PTI*

Ankita-Naiktha clinch ITF W50 Doubles Title

MUMBAI, 18 JAN

India's top tennis player Ankita Raina won her first doubles title in nine months, triumphing in the final of the ITF W50 event with British partner Naiktha Bains, edging past American fourth seeds Jessie Aney and Jessica Failla in the summit clash on Saturday. Ankita had made a first-round exit in the singles round but made up for the disappointment by bagging the doubles title with Naikhta, winning 6-4 3-6 10-8 in one hour and 42 minutes at the DLTA Complex.Before today's title victory, Ankita last won a doubles trophy at the Kashiwa event in Japan in April 2024 when she partnered with Taipei's Yi—*PTI*

KL Rahul likely to miss match against Punjab

BENGALURU, 18 JAN

KL Rahul is likely to miss Karnataka's Ranji Trophy match against Punjab, beginning here on Thursday, to continue his recovery from an elbow niggle. The PTI has learned that the India batter has conveyed to the BCCI medical staff his concern about the issue, and they are monitoring him currently. However, Rahul has a chance to play against Haryana in the season's last league match, starting on 30 January. The Karnataka State Cricket Association is set to announce the squad for the match against Punjab in a day or two. However, other Indian players from the state Prasidh Krishna and Devdutt Padikkal -- will be available for selection as both of them are currently playing in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. —*PTI*

Monfils upsets No. 4 Fritz, fights into AO 4th round

Iga in total control during a 6-1, 6-0 rout of Raducanu

At 38, Monfils is enjoying a late-career flourish and Fritz felt the full brunt of it as the Frenchman rallied from a set down to claim a thrilling 3-6 7-5 7-6(1) 6-4 win in the afternoon sunshine at Margaret Court Arena.

American firepower Gael Monfils *PHOTO: @AUSTRALIANOPEN*

MELBOURNE, 18 JAN

French flair topped American firepower as Gael Monfils turned back the clock to dump fourth seed Taylor Fritz out of the Australian Open on Saturday and book a place in the last 16.

At 38, Monfils is enjoying a late-career flourish and Fritz felt the full brunt of it as the Frenchman rallied from a set down to claim a thrilling 3-6 7-5 7-6(1) 6-4 win in the afternoon sunshine at Margaret Court Arena. With this win, he becomes the second-oldest man ever to make the last 16 at Melbourne Park after Roger Federer. Soaking up punishment from Fritz with a stonewall defense, Monfils dismantled the American with pure tennis "IQ" and danced a jig after sealing the win with an ace down the "T". The win made Monfils the second oldest man to reach the fourth round since 1988 when the tournament started having full, 128-player draws. Only Federer, in 2020, was older.

"It was an unbelievable match," said Monfils, riding an eight-match winning streak. "Taylor is that strong, serving very well.

Monfils, who won the Auckland Classic in the lead-up to Melbourne Park, will play the winner of American Ben Shelton and Italy's Lorenzo Musetti.

Everything came so easily for **Iga Swiatek** during a 6-1, 6-0 victory over Emma Raducanu on Saturday in the only Australian Open women's third-round match between two past Grand Slam champions — if you thought that meant it would be close, you'd have been rather wrong — that this was how she described it:

"I felt like the ball," Swiatek said, "is listening to me."

Loud and clear. Asked to explain that sensation, Swiatek put her two index fingers a few inches apart and said, "It's just being able to aim for this kind of space." Then she spread her palms more than a foot apart to show that's the margin for error on other days. The difference, she said, comes down to "being more precise and knowing where the ball is going to go, seeing the effects that you want it to." When the five-time major champion and former long-time No. 1-ranked woman now No. 2, behind Aryna Sabalenka is at the height of her powers, as she sure has seemed to be in Week 1 at Melbourne Park, it is hard for anyone to slow Swiatek down. The heavy-spinning, high-bouncing forehands. The squeaky sneaker scrambling to get to every shot. The terrific return. And so on.

Later Saturday, No. 4 Taylor Fritz, the runner-up at last year's U.S. Open, became the highest-seeded man to leave the bracket, defeated by 38-year-old Gael Monfils 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (1), 6-4. Monfils joined Roger Federer as the only man 38 or older to get to the fourth round in Melbourne since the field expanded to 128 players in 1988. —*PTI*

20-year-old Californian Alex Michelsen beats 6-3, 7-6 (5), 6-2 No. 20 seed Karen Khachanov

BALAJI-VARELA PAIR OUSTED FROM AO

India's N Sriram Balaji and his Mexican partner Miguel Angel Reyes-Varela bowed out of the Australian Open men's doubles after a second-round loss to the Portuguese pair of Nuno Borges and Francisco Cabral here on Saturday. The closely contested match ended with a scoreline of 6-7 (7), 6-4, 3-6 after two hours and nine minutes of intense play at Melbourne Park. The first set was a gripping affair that lasted 56 minutes with neither pair able to break serve as it went into a tiebreaker, where Borges and Cabral held their composure under pressure to go one set up. The Indo-Mexican pair started strong, taking an early 2-1 lead and maintaining their momentum to go up 5-4. However, the Portuguese duo responded well, holding their serve to make it 5-5, and then 6-6, pushing the set into a tiebreak. Borges and Cabral did well to grab the set. —PTI

IST TEST : WEST INDIES VS PAK

Pakistan's spinners Sajid Khan and Noman Ali weaved their magic to bundle out West Indies for a minimal 137 runs *PHOTO: PTI*

Sajid and Noman share nine to bowl WI out for 137

MULTAN, 18 JAN

Noman Ali and Sajid Khan put on a spin bowling masterclass on a surface they found to their tastes, taking nine of the ten wickets to skittle West Indies out for 137 in less than a session. The visitors had little answer to the pair, who bowled all but 14 deliveries of the innings.

Only an entertaining 10th wicket 46-run stand from Jomel Warrican and Jayden Seales helped West Indies past 100, and then whittled Pakistan's lead down to 93; they were 68 for eight at one point, with the last two wickets contributing more than half of their runs. Sajid started the dismantling in just his second over when he cleaned up Mikyle Louis and Keacy Carty off successive balls, the latter thanks to a superb slip catch from debutant Muhammad Hurraira.

By the end of his third over, he had four wickets as West Indies floundered, unable to either defend or attack against an unerringly accurate spin duo.Noman Ali joined the fun, getting drift and turn to clip the outside of Justin Greaves' off stump.

It would be the first of five for the left arm, which was beginning to get huge rip-offs barely formed footmarks.As the innings proceeded, West Indies began to adopt a more bellicose outlook, trying to swindle some runs along the way.

But there was limited successive - multiple batters dragging it onto their stumps - before the final two partnerships. Gudakesh Motie and Warrican began to play belligerent shots, Warrican utilizing the back of the bat with reverse sweeps a handful of times. The final partnership was the only period when West Indies truly dominated the spinners, though, connecting cleanly as they hit both spinners over cow corner for multiple sixes. It forced Pakistan into bringing on Abrar Ahmed for the first time as the pair plundered 46 off 21 balls.Tea West Indies 137 (Warrican 31*, Seales 22, Noman 5-39, Sajid 4-65) trail Pakistan 230 all out (Shakeel 84, Rizwan 71, Seales 3-27) by 93 runs —*PTI*

A Borussia Dortmund's Emre Can with teammates looks dejected after the match *PHOTO: @FRANKFURT*

Bundesliga 24-25: Dortmund crisis deepens after 2-0 loss to Frankfurt

MADRID, 18 JAN

Borussia ortmund slumped to a 2-0 loss at Eintracht Frankfurt on Friday for its third straight Bundesliga defeat that deepened the crisis at the Ruhr Valley club.

The result piles more pressure on already-embattled Dortmund coach Nuri Sahin, who still enjoyed the backing of club bosses after its midweek defeat by struggling Holstein Kiel.

The visitors did have the first chance in the game, but Serhou Guirassy's ninth-minute header bounced off the post.

They were then caught completely off guard nine minutes later when Eintracht broke clear, and Hugo Ekitike, who launched the move, slotted in to complete it.Eintracht, which was without top striker Omar Marmoush, came close to a second goal four minutes later, but Ansgar Knauff's curled effort bounced off the post.The club had said before the game that transfer talks were ongoing with an unnamed club for Egyptian forward Marmoush's transfer.

Manchester City is reportedly close to signing the striker, who walked onto the pitch after the end of the game to congratulate his Eintracht teammates in what was likely his last appearance in front of the home fans.

Dortmund, which travels to Bologna for the Champions League on Tuesday, could not find a way back into the game despite pressing for an equalizer, with Serhou Guirassy twice calling for a penalty after going down in the box but instead earning a booking. —*PTI*

Chelsea make stunning move for Man United

Chelsea is looking to feed their winger addiction by making inquiries over two talented young wide men – one of whom just so happens to play for top-flight rivals Manchester United.Alejandro Garnacho, who was reportedly the subject of a bid from Napoli as well, is the United player in their sights, while English talent Jamie Bynoe-Gittens, who currently plays for Borussia Dortmund, is the other. —*AP*

Karnataka wins record fifth title

BENGALURU, 18 JAN

Karnataka ended a five-year title drought as they defeated Vidarbha by 36 runs to claim their record-extending fifth Vijay Hazare Trophy title after the 2024-25 edition final at the Kotambi Stadium in Vadodara.Led by Mayank Agarwal, Karnataka had a near-spotless run throughout the campaign as they finished the group stage with six wins in seven matches.

Led by the in-form captain and Devdutt Padikkal, Karnataka brushed aside Baroda and Haryana en route to their first final in five years before defeating the unbeaten Vidarbha to claim the title.

Led by Mayank Agarwal and R Smaran's century, Karnataka lifted their fifth title on Saturday *PHOTO: BBC/PTI*

Interestingly, Karnataka has emerged victorious in each of their last four final appearances.

After being sent into bat on Saturday, Karnataka put on a mammoth 348/6 on the board on the back of youngster R Smaran's second List A century.

Despite Vidarbha opener Dhruv Shorey's third consecutive century in the knockouts, Vidarbha fell short in the chase.

Karnataka claimed their maiden title in the 2013-14 season before defending the title in the following season. They claimed their third title in the 2017-18 season with Agarawal topping the batting charts.

Padikkal had emerged as the highest run-getter when Karnataka defeated Tamil Nadu to lift their fourth in the 2019-20 season.—*PTI*

B'desh, SA and Australia register wins on Day 1 of ICC U19 WTWC

KUALA LUMPUR, 18 JAN

Bangladesh, South Africa, and Australia picked up wins on the rain-affected opening day of the ICC U19 Women's T20 World Cup on Saturday.

South Africa won an all-action match over New Zealand to get their campaign up and running while Bangladesh beat Nepal by five wickets in a low-scoring game.

Caoimhe Bray shone as Australia defeated Scotland while three matches were abandoned due to the inclement weather across Malaysia.

England and Ireland's contest ended seven balls short of a full match while debutants Nigeria and Samoa, and the USA and Pakistan were unable to get on the park.

South Africa came out winners in a nervy match, beating New Zealand by 22 runs in Borneo and taking the advantage in Group C.

With the match reduced to 11 overs, South Africa came out all guns blazing with the first fifty partnership of the World Cup between Simone Lourens and Jemma Botha.

New Zealand hit back as Ayaan Lambat dismissed top scorer Botha and Fay Cowling in back-to-back deliveries before Karabo Meso's 25 pushed South Africa to 91 for seven.

Emma McLeod led the chase for New Zealand and made South Africa pay, scoring back-to-back fours having been dropped on 10.

Fifteen-year-old Bray announced herself on the global stage as she took three wickets for the loss of just one run, also taking a stunning diving catch in Australia's nine-wicket win.

Eleanor Larosa had set the tone after Australia chose to bowl, dismissing Pippa Kelly in her first over as she also took three wickets.

Bray claimed the final dismissal as Scotland was bowled out for 48 with Emma Walsingham top-scoring with 12. Australia was not in the mood to hang around as Kate Pelle led the scoring charge, hitting Mollie Parker for three sixes in the first over. —*PTI*

Goa aims to reclaim 2nd spot against East Bengal

MARGAO, 18 JAN

PHOTO: PTI

Only see Goa reclaim second place but also keep their hopes alive for a top-of-the-table finish. East Bengal, on the other hand, have struggled up front this season, creating the fewest goal-scoring chances in the league (126).

Their tally of 16 goals is among the lowest, with only bottom-placed Hyderabad FC (11) and debutants Mohammedan Sporting (8) scoring fewer.

For FC Goa, Armando Sadiku has been a standout performer, scoring nine goals this season. One more strike would make him the 11th player in club history to reach double digits in ISL goals.

Brison Fernandes has also shone, with five goals, eight successful dribbles, and 16 goal-scoring chances as the duo will hold the key to their return to winning ways.

East Bengal will rely on Hijazi Maher's defensive solidity, with the player averaging 1.36 interceptions per game. Forward Naorem Mahesh Singh, who leads the team in goal contributions (three goals and two assists), will aim to break his scoring drought against FC Goa this season. —*PTI*

RANJI TROPHY

Rohit confirms availability for Mumbai

MUMBAI, 18 JAN

India captain Rohit Sharma on Saturday confirmed his availability for Mumbai's next Ranji Trophy match against Jammu and Kashmir but stressed the need to take time off from a busy calendar amid the clamor for star players' participation in domestic cricket.

Rohit also said that no player takes the premier domestic red ball tournament for granted.Mumbai will play Jammu and Kashmir at the MCA-BKC Ground when the Ranji Trophy resumes on January 23. Asked about his availability for the game during a press conference at the BCCI Headquarters here, Rohit responded in the positive. The India skipper then added, "Last 6-7 years, if you look at our calendar, we haven't been sitting home for 45 days when cricket is going on. You do get time when IPL finishes when nothing happens after that."

"Our domestic season begins in October and ends in March. Guys who are not playing all formats and when there's domestic cricket happening can play."For me personally, Since I've started playing Test cricket regularly since 2019, you hardly get time. When you play international cricket regularly, you need time off, just to refresh. Nobody takes it for granted."The 37-year-old Rohit, who has ruled out Test retirement despite managing one fifty in his last 15 innings in the format, trained with the Mumbai squad at the Wankhede Stadium on Tuesday ahead of the second phase of the Ranji Trophy.India dropped their woefully out-of-form captain for the final Test in Australia at SCG after he failed as an opener, his usual role, as well as a middle-order batter.—*PTI*

India aptain Rohit Sharma on Saturday confirmed his availability for Mumbai's next Ranji Trophy match against Jammu and Kashmir